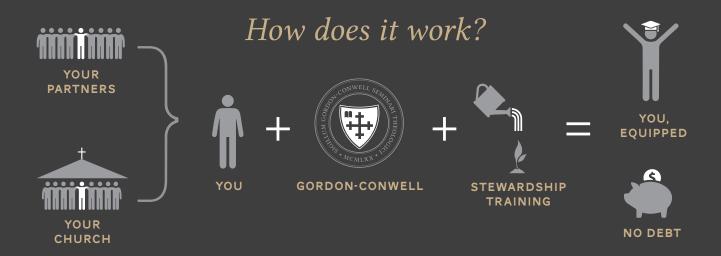


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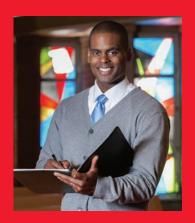


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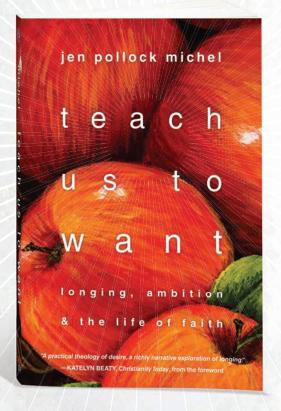
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#### 2015 Christianity Today

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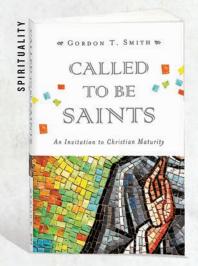
BETHANY JENKINS, founder of The Park Forum

"Who has not wrestled with the tensions between what we desire and what (we think) God desires? Michel has brilliantly lit a way through our own dark, tangled brambles. I've been waiting for this book for a long time."

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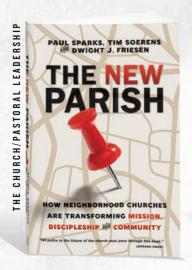


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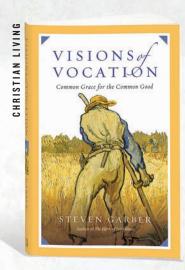
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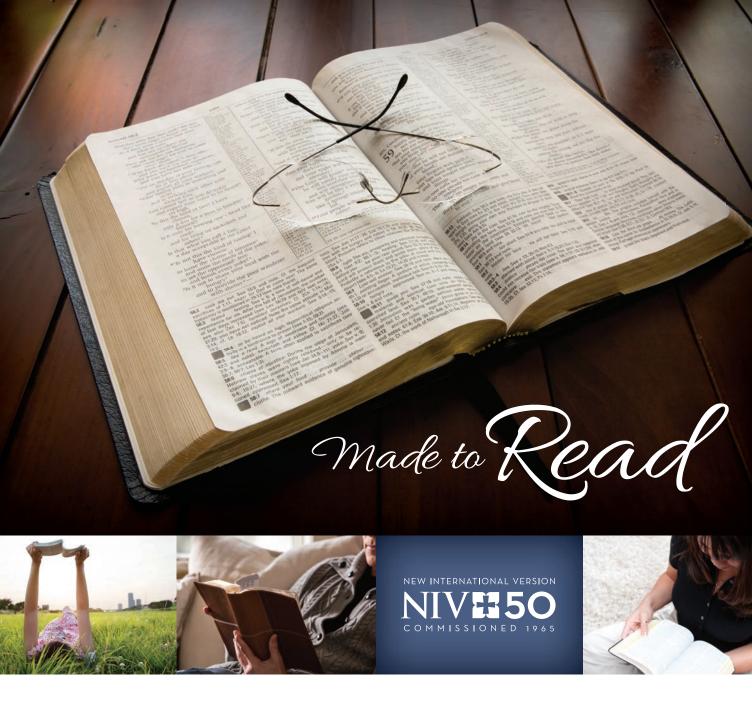
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# **EDITOR'S NOTE**

HESE DAYS, if you walk the hallways of cr (if you're in the area, stop on by!), you might hear a staff member mention "beautiful orthodoxy." Drawing from the best of Christian thinking, editor Mark Galli recently coined it to guide our ministry in a broader climate of rancor and spiritual rootlessness.

"Beautiful orthodoxy" might seem a paradox. But in the classical and the Christian traditions, truth and beauty are inseparable. Only relatively recently has it seemed that to be winsome and loving, one must downplay truth claims. Or that, to speak the truth in a pluralistic world, one must pick a rhetorical battle. Indeed, our social media landscape often feels like a fight between the truth-Christians and the beauty-Christians (with both groups claiming that Jesus likes them best). Pick your side.

Except we at cr don't think you have to. To our delight, in many articles in this issue, truth and beauty dance side by side. In our cover story (p. 30), Andrew Root corrects our ministry

obsession with "reaching millennials" while painting a lovely picture of intergenerational fellowship in the local church. Shannon Sedgwick Davis, who has helped to stop Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony (p.38), embodies *orthopraxy*—what Christian belief actually looks like in the world. (Hint: It's pretty darn stunning.) Even our sobering report on book publishers' marketing practices (p. 50) aims to highlight what ethical, even beautiful book marketing *can* look like. In these and other articles, we aim to ensure that every "no!" we imply is followed by a "yes!" That as we name wrong thinking or behavior, we also heartily affirm the abundant life available in our true and beautiful Savior.

In this month's testimony (p. 96), Gregory Alan Thornbury honors Carl F. H. Henry, arguably the most important evangelical theologian of the past century, as well as the first editor of *Christianity Today*. A cursory read of Henry suggests that "beautiful orthodoxy" is exactly what he pursued throughout his 90 years on earth. Christian liberalism said "yes" to cultural and intellectual trends, at the expense of truth. Christian fundamentalism said "no" to individual sins, at the expense of beauty. By contrast, Henry reaffirmed Scripture's "no!" to personal and cosmic sin. And he preached Scripture's "yes!" to engaging the mind and heart of persons and cultures with the full-orbed gospel of Christ.

In The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, Henry wrote:

The evangelical task is the preaching of the gospel, in the interest of individual regeneration by the supernatural grace of God, in such a way that divine redemption can be recognized as the best solution of our problems, individual and social.

When we practice beautiful orthodoxy, redemption is finally recognized as God's "yes" to us, and to new and unending life in him.



# TRUTH AND BEAUTY

What we hope you see in every article.

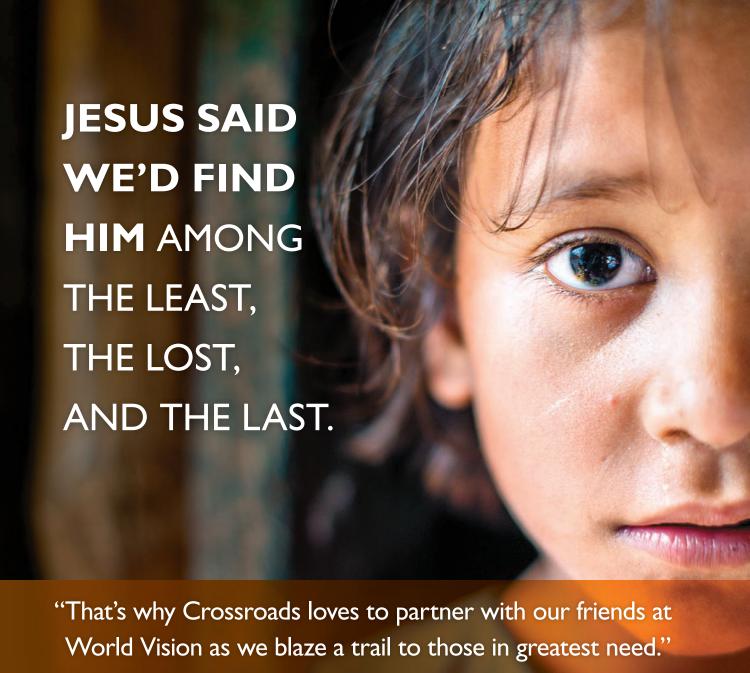
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—Phil Print, Senior Pastor, Crossroads Church, MN

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

MAGINE THESE FIRST VERSES of John's gospel (ESV) were a principal motivator for evangelist Billy Graham when he, along with his father-in-law, L. Nelson Bell, launched *Christianity Today* 59 years ago. Graham was looking for ways to shine gospel light in theological darkness. He used ct to give evangelicalism a central place from which its doctrinal commitments and Christ-honoring agenda could counterbalance an advancing liberalism.

Since then, the threat of mainline liberalism has slowed to a crawl. But biblical and theological ignorance continues, as well as confusion over the meaning of *orthodoxy* and all of its implications.

Today, many believers are being wooed by "attractive heterodoxy" and pressured to either conform to public sentiment or be shamed into silence. In this context, ct stays committed to thoughtfully engaging our society with a convicted civility that points to a better way. That offers restoration, renewal, and hope where there is chaos, crisis, and despair.

creditor Mark Galli refers to this commitment—this ministry cause—as a "beautiful orthodoxy." We present it to a church that is tempted to sacrifice the wonderful truths of the gospel for mere relevance, or to react to the day's challenges with defensiveness, anger, and legalism. Both responses exhibit a faith that is anemic and unlovely. (For a fuller explanation, see Katelyn Beaty's note on p.7.)

"Given the power of the gospel for salvation," says Mark, "we believe we can make a significant difference in creating a culture that, as Micah puts it, acts justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with God."

I couldn't agree with Mark more. And to see that this beautiful orthodoxy is clearly woven into the fabric of everything our ministry does in 2015, I've asked Mark to add the title "editor in chief" to his already sizable role as cr magazine editor.

His first assignment? To create a written and visual tapestry online and in print across all CT publications (including *Today's Christian Woman, Leadership Journal*, and *Church Law & Tax*) that presents a joyful vision of beautiful orthodoxy in action. We believe this mission will help form cultures and communities that shine forth "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4, ESV).

No small assignment. But it's one we have been pursuing for 59 years. Now it's Mark's turn. CT



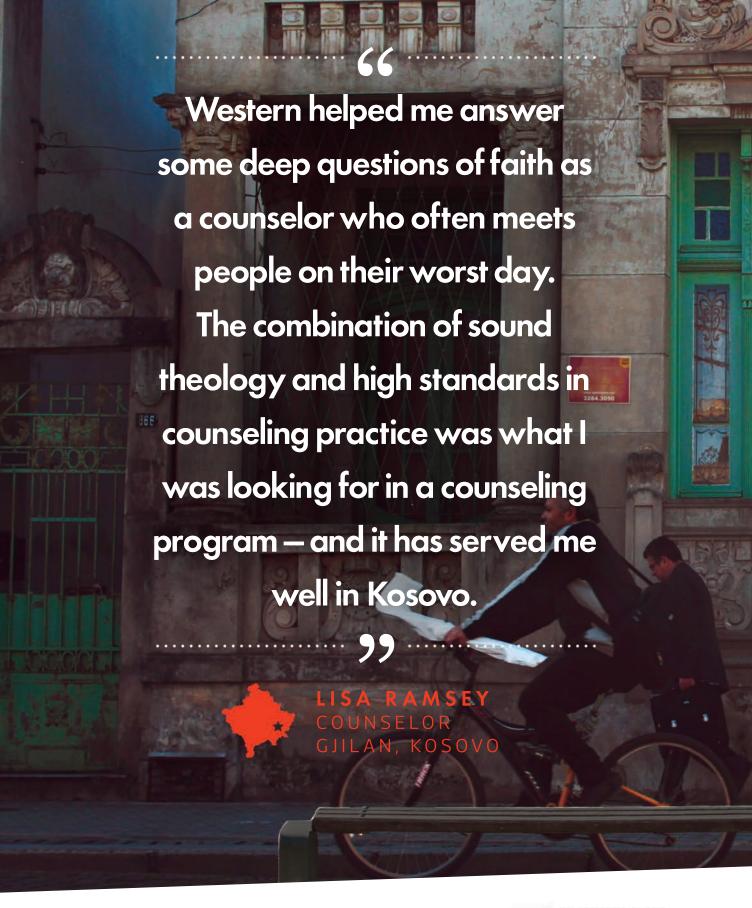
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# REPLY ALL



#### ON THE EDGE OF EXTINCTION

Thank you for the important, insightful, and pertinent article by Philip Jenkins. "On the Edge of Extinction" is a call to take the long view yet to examine present persecution seriously.

However, I was dismayed by the timeline that put the Crusades on the same line as the US military and government. Radical Islamists believe that the West/United States/Christians are out to destroy Islam and to retake the Middle East in a replay of the Crusades. The timeline also seems to say that the US military is a Christian army.

We must remember that our ultimate Commander in Chief would have responded to 9/11 with, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Let us not implicate the Lord in the actions or agenda of the US military and government.

Patricia M. Lelvis Gig Harbor, Washington

As one deeply grieved over the decline of Christian populations in the Middle East (where I spent 30 years of my life), I appreciate Jenkins's article.

He is right: Christians in Arab countries understand how this could happen quickly. But the disappearance of Jews is not a strong example. The establishment of the state of Israel, accompanied by a flood of Palestinians into other Arab countries, created a double pressure on the Jews of the Middle East. The animosity against Israel in these countries easily translated into animosity toward local Jews, and the presence of Israel as an inviting option created a pull in that direction.

I have never heard that Jews were expelled by militias or beheaded if they refused to convert. Their exodus from Lebanon was not complete until the violence of Lebanon's long civil war, which

also created an exodus of Lebanon's diverse population to safer places to study and/or raise families.

Danger should not lead us to despair, so I like Jenkins's conclusion that we must be cautious about claims to understand the goals or directions of history. One thing Christians of the Middle East for sure understand: "When I am weak, then I am strong." Their faith gives them a long view and patience.

Frances Fuller Author, In Borrowed Houses Georgetown, California

# CAN WORSHIP LEADERS AND MUSICIANS AVOID THE TEMPTATION TO 'PERFORM'?

The Open Question on worship leaders may be the most balanced, intelligent, and scripturally on-target commentary that I've read on this subject in a long time. Church music is often spoken of from an imbalanced, biased, and scripturally offbase position. Thanks for publishing these three responses.

Rocco Dapice Westchester County, New York

All worship leading involves some level of performance. If I go out there and worship unselfconsciously, God would enjoy it but you probably wouldn't. Additionally, it would be self-indulgent, ignoring the needs of the congregation. The key is to take the attention a worship platform brings, stay as authentic as possible in the process, and take the attention you get and focus it on God (as opposed to yourself).

Dave Gipson Facebook

#### **GUIDED BY THE GREAT CLOUD**

In regards to the Global Gospel Project essay on reading Scripture with the church fathers: Evangelicals are often guilty of reinventing the wheel and claiming unique insight into original Christianity, unobstructed by millennia of tradition. Let us avoid this common error into which many

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Louis A. Melendez Facebook

#### WE'RE SO VAIN

The book review of *Vainglory* is timely, as vanity is a struggle in our media-saturated culture. I'm not so sure, though, that it's an "obscure" vice for those who use social media. The desirable freedom that author Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung describes is challenging to achieve: "giving up the mirrors, the artificial lighting, and the careful poses and instead resting in the knowledge that we are... beloved in God's sight."

Ellie Dyk Facebook

#### MY OWN FRENCH REVOLUTION

As one who has given his life to evangelism and apologetics, I felt doubly encouraged by the powerful testimony of Guillaume Bignon. What a thrill to hear how the Holy Spirit worked through people and circumstances to tenaciously seek and save a man who was running in the other direction. And in terms of apologetics, there's

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nothing better than an atheist-to-missionary story—particularly in hearing how God used an evangelical pastor in Paris (of all places) to fulfill 1 Peter 3:15 in order to "give an answer" to Guillaume's many questions—all of which helped pave the way to the cross of Christ and to salvation.

Mark Mittelberg Coauthor, Becoming a Contagious Christian Denver

#### THE UNLIKELY INNOVATOR

"The Unlikely Innovator" [October] contained what we believe is a fabricated account of a March 2004 visit by my father, Jerry Falwell Sr., to a University of Phoenix call center in Phoenix. The story also gives the false impression that Liberty University got the inspiration for growing its online educational program from the visit and discussions with Michael Clifford. Neither is true.

My father's calendar and documented travel schedule, as well as discussions with his then-secretary, establish that he did not travel to Phoenix to meet with Clifford or representatives of the University of Phoenix in 2004 (or 2003, as asserted on Clifford's website). Four Liberty University representatives, led by Ronald Godwin, visited the University of Phoenix for the first time in 2006. My dad was not present.

The Liberty representatives agreed to meet with Clifford in Phoenix about a potential purchase of Grand Canyon University, but only on condition that he introduce them to a certain University of Phoenix executive. The Liberty delegation briefly walked through a small portion of a call center and met with the University of Phoenix official in a nearby conference room. The visit was not as described in the article. Neither Clifford nor the University of Phoenix official was ever a consultant for Liberty.

Like all online educators, Liberty's online operation has been influenced, to some extent, by what we know about the practices of the University of Phoenix, but Liberty's operational plans for online growth are unique and homegrown strategies.

We appreciate *Christianity Today* rewriting the article for its website.

Jerry Falwell Jr.
President, Liberty University

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Upon further investigation, our sources refused to reconfirm the story in question. The updated version can be found at ChristianityToday.com.

### **NET GAIN**

Responses from the Web.



"Seems to me that there is a lot of wisdom in this. It will allow restoration to happen at a much deeper level than any impersonal mea culpa from a centralized location ever could."

#### Todd Crawford, Facebook.

Gleanings: "Goodbye, Mars Hill: Mark Driscoll's Multisite Empire Will Sell Properties and Dissolve," by Morgan Lee.

"God is a worthy repository of our deepest heart-stories. If we ran to him first and believed fiercely that his ear was sufficient, what would that do to our need to 'share' with the general public?"

#### Michele Morin, CT online comment.

Her.meneutics: "Not All Vulnerability Is Brave," by Katelyn Beaty.



"My discreet idolatry exposed: 'Our problem is often not selfishness. It's our enslavement to convenience.'"

Eddie Hilburn > @EddieHilburn

Third Culture: "No Such Thing as Convenient Christianity," by Peter W. Chin.

"Refreshing read. So happy to be part of a church that believes in God's radical grace."

#### Stephen Mizesko 🤛 @Stevomizesko

"Pioneers of Grace," interview of Philip Yancey by Amy Julia Becker.

"Another reason for the vitality involved in the experience of a Spirit-filled life: There is a surrender that must take place consciously when one asks to speak in tongues. Thank you for opening the discussion while closing it to arguments about the validity of Pentecostalism, etc. You've done the body of Christ a huge service!"

#### Robin Swieringa, CT online comment.

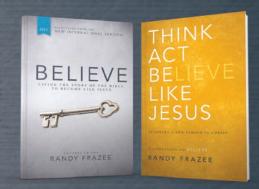
Exchange: "Why Do These Pentecostals Keep Growing?" by Ed Stetzer.



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#### **GLEANINGS**



#### **FAITH OR THERAPY FIRST?**

LifeWay Research asked three groups of Protestants—pastors, family members of people with acute mental illness (severe depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia), and those with such illnesses—when "psychological therapy" should be used. Before "sharing spiritual principles"? After? Few opposed therapy, though many were unsure.



FIRST FAITH, THEN THERAPY



FIRST THERAPY, THEN FAITH



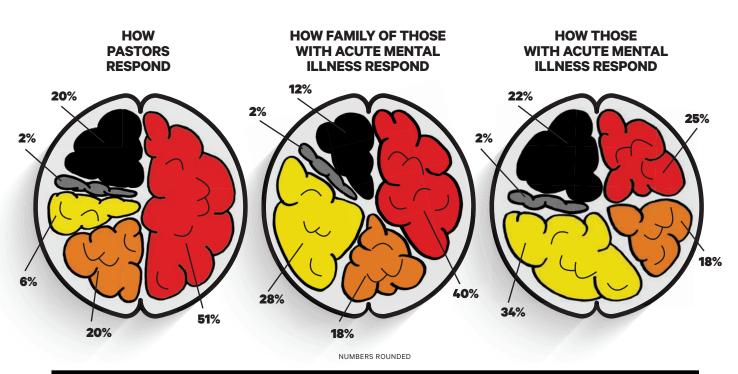
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**FAITH ONLY** 



**DON'T KNOW** 



# Rick Warren gets standing ovation at Vatican

"What's left to say?" began Rick Warren, the 28th speaker at Pope Francis's high-profile marriage conference. Still, the Saddleback Church pastor received a standing ovation at the Vatican after he laid out an eight-step "action plan" to support and celebrate marriage. Other Protestant speakers included theologian N. T. Wright, Southern Baptist Russell Moore, Bruderhof pastor Johann Christoph Arnold, and black church scholar Jacqueline C. Rivers.

Another marriage conference this September will bring Francis to Philadelphia for his first US visit.

#### Court upholds big pastor perk

Churches can stop worrying that their pastors' best benefit will be taken away by an atheist group's lawsuit—for now. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a lower court's high-profile decision that pastor housing allowances are unconstitutional. Since the Freedom From Religion Foundation hadn't sought the allowance for its own leaders, the

court said, it had no right to challenge the 60-year-old tax break. The Department of Justice has argued that atheists would qualify as "ministers of the gospel" under IRS guidelines. Legal expert Richard Hammar cautions it isn't clear that the IRS would agree.

# New churches banned over fake miracles

Prompted by a TV expose of a pastor who allegedly asks followers for advance payments on prayers and miracles, Kenya

## "It didn't seem like a big feat to me as a Christian. I know the Lord will give us whatever we ask for."

22 SS CC RE

**Jerel Keene,** a Southern Baptist pastor who had a 200-year-old Anglican church in Nova Scotia disassembled, transported 2,200 miles, and rebuilt for his congregation in Abita Springs, Louisiana.

**RELIGION & ETHICS NEWSWEEKLY** 

banned new religious organizations from receiving government approval. Attorney General Githu Muigai sought proposals to protect people "seeking religious nourishment" from a "miracle-faking spree," likely by letting denominations operate more like trade unions and political parties, which regulate their own members. (Currently, the Registrar of Societies vets new churches.) In 2012, the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya asked for similar powers to regulate questionable pastors who were "critically hurting the image of the church."

## Multnomah and Convergent publishers separate staff

A publisher has formally separated how its evangelical and progressive Christian books are produced. In May, the National Religious Broadcasters raised ethical questions when staff from WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group worked on a theologically liberal book (God and the Gay Christian) published by a sister imprint, Convergent [July/August]. In November, parent company Crown Publishing Group moved Convergent out of the Colorado Springs offices it shared with Multnomah. An executive said this makes Crown the only publisher with "dedicated imprints to serve every major Christian tradition."

# Public schools will start teaching Christianity

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that Turkey must broaden its mandatory religion classes, which have favored Sunni Islam. In response, the Muslim nation is rolling out an elective in Christianity. Christian groups united to create the curriculum. However, reaching the required quota of at least 12 students per class will mean gathering Christian students from different schools, Mine Yildirim of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee told World Watch Monitor. Turkey has also turned one-third of its secular public schools into Qur'anic schools. World Evangelical Alliance's Brian Miller noted many Christian parents now have no option but to submit their children to an Islamic education or pay for private schooling.

## More cities restrict feeding the homeless

The arrest of a 90-year-old man and 2 pastors for feeding the homeless in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, spotlighted increasing tensions between ministries and cities. Over the past 2 years, 21 cities have restricted people from sharing food with the homeless, and another 10 are taking steps to do likewise, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless. While some ministry leaders argue the bans restrict their religious freedom, FCS Urban Ministries founder Bob Lupton says handing out freebies "simply increases dependency" [September 2012]. In December, a judge halted Fort Lauderdale's law.

Court upholds rights of religious groups

A doctor who was fired from a

church-owned hospital after his divorce won't get his job back, Germany's highest court has ruled. Religious organizations have the right to ask their employees to abide by their own moral code, the Federal Constitutional Court maintained. Rulings from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) are less clear. In 2010, it overturned the dismissal of a German church organist after he started another family while still married. But more recently, the ECHR narrowly affirmed the firing of a Catholic priest in Spain who was protesting clerical celibacy.

# Muslim nation's capital gets Christian governor

Jakarta, the capital of the world's most populous Muslim nation, got its first Christian governor in 50 years this fall—but not through the normal process. When Jakarta's mayor, Joko Widodo, was elected the country's president, Indonesian law dictated that the rest of his term be filled by his deputy governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama. A Protestant with a reputation for straightforward transparency, Basuki took office despite weeks of street protests from Islamists.

#### **ORIGINS**

Is it important to have correct beliefs about human origins?

Who says yes:

63%

O of creationists

of theistic evolutionists



NATIONAL STUDY OF RELIGION & HUMAN ORIGINS **HEADLINES** 



**Denominations** 

# The Season of Adventists

Ellen G. White's denomination gains one million new followers each year.



ne of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's most famous sons, retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, is seeking evangelical support for a likely 2016 presidential bid. But the global leader of his church worries that the thriving denomination is becoming too mainstream.

In 2014, for the 10th year in a row, more than 1 million people became Adventists, hitting a record 18.1 million members. But even as Adventist schools and hospitals spread, president Ted N. C. Wilson is concerned about assimilation.

"Don't be tempted by the Devil to blend in with the crowd or be 'politically correct,'" Wilson said during his annual sermon in October. "Don't proclaim a 'generic' Christianity or a 'cheap-grace Christ,' which does not point to the distinctive biblical truths to be declared worldwide" by Adventists (who regard themselves as God's faithful remnant).

Wilson listed ways that Satan is attacking Adventism, including attempts

more dialogue with mainstream evangelicals. The NAD has also overwhelmingly approved women's ordination, despite a global denominational ban.

Some Adventists worry that changing worship styles mean the denomination is moving toward evangelicalism, acknowledged Garrett Caldwell, public relations director for the world church. But though the church is indeed trying different strategies to reach the culture, it won't be joining the National Association of Evangelicals anytime soon, he said.

"Anything that is a 'how' item, we should be willing to make an adjustment to," Wilson told ct. "But not if it's a 'what' kind of item... driven by our theology and by our history."

Wilson's speeches highlight the separatist values of the 150-year-old denomination. Its belief that God began judging Christians in 1844 and its reverence for Ellen G. White's teachings have led to a rocky relationship with evangelicals. Adventists

"There's a dynamic that moves back and forth between those poles."

The NAD recently announced it would move out of the Silver Spring, Maryland, building it has long shared with the global headquarters. "[We] need to have [our] own unique message and strategies that are relevant and work in our territory," NAD president Daniel Jackson told church leaders in November. "It's time that we grow up and leave our parent's house."

The tension over separation or collaboration recalls other religious movements founded in the early 1800s, such as the Restoration Movement, said LifeWay Research president Ed Stetzer. Also known as the Stone–Campbell Movement, it eventually fractured into congregations that engaged evangelicalism more (Christian Churches) and less (Churches of Christ).

American secularization may be pushing Adventists closer to other Christians. Adventists have joined evangelicals, Catholics, and others on many amicus briefs in recent religious freedom cases involving contraception, tax-free clergy housing, and other issues.

Such efforts can send a red flag to groups who don't want to lose their distinctive beliefs, said Stetzer. "But that does not mean groups always lose those beliefs. For example, the Assemblies of God is distinctively Pentecostal and evangelical."

"Our differences are an asset until they become offensive," said Gerry Wagoner, president of ADvindicate, which opposes women's ordination and evangelical ties. "How can we love everyone and still retain the distinctives that make us unique?"

Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM IS **THE FIFTH-LARGEST** CHRISTIAN COMMUNION WORLDWIDE, AFTER CATHOLICISM, EASTERN ORTHODOXY, ANGLICANISM, AND THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD.

to make it easier to join; advancing Pentecostal worship styles; and people moving "independently" from the main church.

Many of those warnings seemed aimed at the global church's North American Division (NAD). (Though only about 1 million Adventists live in North America, they send out nearly half of the church's missionaries and operate 15 of its colleges.) Many NAD members are seeking

explored joining the World Evangelical Alliance in 2007, but the groups could only agree "to cooperate, where advisable, in areas of shared interest."

"There has been a continuing tension about whether [Adventists] see themselves as distinct, or as one among many evangelical denominations with a few special emphases," said David Neff, former ct editor and a former Adventist minister.

## **Signs of Belief**

A small case over church marketing becomes supremely important.

he nation's highest court kicks off the New Year with an unlikely case, brought by the pastor of a 30-member church that meets in a senior center in Arizona.

Clyde Reed, pastor of Good News Presbyterian Church, is fighting the town of Gilbert, a Phoenix suburb named in 2013 as one of America's 10 most friendly cities for conservatives.

Good News, a member of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, has used temporary signs to announce services since it began 14 years ago. In 2005, Gilbert began enforcing a sign code restricting the size, location, number, and duration of signs advertising events. Penalties for breaking the code include fines and jail time for repeated violations.

The restrictions don't apply to political, ideological, or homeowners association signs, which can be larger and displayed

longer. "The government shouldn't be able to pick and choose speech favorites," said David Cortman, vice president of litigation for Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), which represents Reed.

The case, which will be argued January 12, could clarify the "distinction between content-based and content-neutral restrictions . . . [which is] one of the most important rules of First Amendment law," said UCLA's Eugene Volokh, Notre Dame's Richard Garnett, and other law professors in an amicus brief supporting Reed.

Even in the digital age, road signs remain important, said Thomas Berg, a law professor at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, who filed a brief arguing that Gilbert is infringing on the constitutional right to assemble. "Even a general Google search for a church doesn't reach the same audience as a sign reaching people who are just driving through."

Gilbert attorney Michael Hamblin says the sign code is intended to make things easier for churches and nonprofits, allowing them to place temporary signs without first waiting for a permit.

"The ADF wants religious groups to be allowed to post free, permanent advertisements throughout an entire city area

POLITICAL SIGN
32 SQUARE FEET

GOOD NEWS CHURCH SIGN 6 SQUARE FEET

without any regulation or restriction," he said. He noted Reed's case had lost twice in the federal district court in Phoenix, as well as twice in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

Few cases make it through the costly and time-intensive litigation process to arrive before the Supreme Court. This makes Reed's case unusual. But the fact that the plaintiff represents such a small religious group is not, said Eric Rassbach, deputy general counsel of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. Larger churches and religious organizations often have political clout that smaller ones do not.

"It's not an accident that it's [smaller] groups running afoul of the political system," Rassbach said. "In this situation, there's no political cost to just shutting down the signs. That's when you want the First Amendment to come in and protect the little guy."

#### **Under Discussion**

**Compiled by Ruth Moon** 



#### Q: Should pastors stop signing civil marriage certificates?

In response to same-sex marriage, hundreds signed a pledge endorsed by *First Things* to separate civil and Christian marriage. LifeWay Research found that 1 in 4 pastors (and 1 in 3 Americans) support such a move.





"For a long time, Christianity has sewn its teachings into the fabric of Western culture. That was a good thing. But the season of sewing is ending. Now is a time for rending, not for the sake of disengaging from culture or retreating from the public square, but so that our salt does not lose its savor."

**R. R. Reno,** editor, *First Things* 

"The pledge is a small gesture, but gestures provoke and can galvanize. It's a bit of political theater, but theater can shatter complacency. Political theatrics must be preceded and followed by principled and strategic discussion, but effective political theater raises the stakes and intensifies debate."

**Peter Leithart,** senior fellow, New St. Andrews College

"Not yet. We cannot so easily divorce Christian and civil marriage, because everyone has a compelling interest in legal, natural matrimony. It is a common grace. Every important measure of social thriving is driven by the prevalence of natural marriage in a community."

**Glenn T. Stanton,** director of family formation studies, Focus on the Family

"Not yet. For now, by registering gospel-qualified unions as civil marriages and not officiating at unions that are not gospel-qualified, we call the government to its responsibility even as we call attention to its limits."

**Russell Moore,** president, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission "The people who would be punished are the ones who conform to the pastor's vision of marriage, who now have to have a second ceremony with a civil figure. Every First Amendment scholar agrees that religious figures won't be asked to sanction marriages they don't believe in."

**Robin Fretwell Wilson,** law professor, University of Illinois



or most of the past century, almost all (more than 90%) of Latin Americans were Catholics. But decades of attrition have resulted in a record 1 in 5 Latinos now identifying as Protestants.

Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua lead the way, where Protestants constitute 4 in 10 residents of each nation. But Protestants in those 3 countries diverge on many measures of orthodox belief and practice, according to a detailed survey of 19 Latin American countries and territories by the Pew Research Center.

Guatemala's Protestants arguably seem the most mature. They are the most likely of all 19 surveyed groups to evangelize weekly (53%), to believe only Christ leads to eternal life (74%), and to exhibit high commitment (75% pray daily, attend services weekly, and consider faith very important). Even their millennials are the most religious (71% are highly committed).

Protestants in Nicaragua and Honduras are more varied. Only 1 in 3 share their faith on a weekly basis. About 6 in 10 are highly committed to church attendance and prayer. On Christianity's exclusive access to eternal life, only two-thirds of Hondurans and half of Nicaraguans agree. And only 45 percent of Nicaragua's millennials are highly committed to their faith.

Further, Honduran Protestants are among Latin America's most syncretistic, with 42 percent exhibiting medium to high engagement with indigenous beliefs and practices (a figure that's higher than for Catholics in most Latin American countries). Nicaraguan Protestants exhibited similarly high levels (35%), but only 24

percent of Guatemalan Protestants are similarly syncretistic.

Demographics don't explain the differences. On syncretism, for example, only 7 percent of Hondurans are indigenous, while more than 40 percent of Guatemalans are. If indigenous roots led to syncretism, those numbers would be reversed by country.

Education doesn't solve the puzzle either. Guatemalans rank third among Latin American Protestants for low education levels; only 25 percent have secondary education. But right behind are Hondurans (30%) and Nicaraguans (33%).

Missions also fails to explain it. Approximately 1 in 3 Protestants in Honduras and Nicaragua say their church maintains close ties to US churches. Yet only 22 percent of Guatemalans say the same.

One possible remaining explanation: quick versus slow growth. In 1996, a quarter of Guatemalans identified as Protestant. But Honduras and Nicaragua didn't see steady Protestant growth until 1997 and 1999, respectively, according to Chilean pollster Latinobarómetro. Honduras crossed the 25 percent mark in 2 years, in 1999; Nicaragua did so in 2003.

PROTESTANTS WHO WERE RAISED CATHOLIC:

NICARAGUANS: 50%
US HISPANICS: 47%
HONDURANS: 26%
GUATEMALANS: 23%

Kurt Ver Beek, director of Calvin College's
Honduras Program, questions the idea that Honduran
Protestants practice a less mature faith than their Guatemalan counterparts. He believes the differences found by Pew have more to do with the different emphases of the oldest and largest Protestant denominations and their media.

"Those topics may just have been preached on harder [in Guatemala]," said Ver Beek, noting many Honduran churches place a larger emphasis on not smoking, drinking, or dancing.

Guatemala does have more megachurches than the other countries, says Todd Hartch, author of *The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity*. "When churches get to this size, they can have schools, conferences, radio stations, and TV shows."

But size and familiarity bring liabilities, too. "In a sense, the 'maturing' [in Guatemala] has brought with it the loss of the energy of youth," said Denver Seminary's Daniel Carroll Rodas. He is concerned that recent pastor scandals could derail public witness. "The moral respect . . . clearly isn't there like it used to be."

Protestants might not stay so successful at "stealing sheep" from Catholics, says Ver Beek, since Catholic leaders now engage more with young people, recruit more local leadership, and offer more in-depth Bible studies and community outreach.

"The extreme growth in the Protestant churches has pushed the Catholic Church to ultimately become more active," he said. "Good and exciting things are happening." Morgan Lee





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# VIEWS



WHERE WE STAND

# AMNESTY IS NOT A DIRTY WORD

Christians, of all people, should know that.





#### **EVEN BEFORE PRESIDENT OBAMA** an-

nounced his executive order this fall to integrate some 5 million illegal immigrants into our political life, charges of "Amnesty!" rang loud and clear. Like "The Case against Obama's Amnesty," which Sen. John Cornyn argued at *National Review* daysearlier. Afterward, the charges only rang louder: "Congress hasn't passed immigration legislation," announced the Heritage Foundation, "but that hasn't stopped President Obama from issuing directives that grant amnesty to illegal immigrants."

The word has been so toxic, pro-reform groups like the Evangelical Immigration Table (a Christian coalition that includes World Vision, the National Association of

# How can we insist on something as unbending as 'the rule of law' when we bear daily the guilt of breaking the most unbending and righteous of all laws?

will break down, and millions more immigrants will come pouring across our borders, hampering our economy.

Other Christians worry about tyranny. Mark Tooley, president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, referred to another evangelical leader, saying, "Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president Albert Mohler has critiqued President Obama's executive amnesty for millions of illegal immigrants as a

simply to facilitate political reconciliation.

Here's the point: Opponents of these executive pardons vigorously argued otherwise, but in no case did these edicts lead to legal chaos (more rebellion or more draft evasion)—or to tyranny.

Whether it was politically expedient or effective for President Obama to issue his latest executive order; whether and how much should be expected of illegal immigrants on the way to citizenship; how and where to control borders—all of these detailed political questions need to be worked through with care by legislators and concerned citizens. But the one thing we Christians especially should not run from is any action accused of offering "amnesty."

How can we, of all people, insist on something as unbending as "the rule of law" when, in fact, we bear daily the guilt of breaking the most unbending and righteous of all laws? How can we, of all people, object to reconciling illegal immigrants with our political and social order when we, illegal before God, have been granted amnesty from sin in a free act of grace-no strings attached? How can we, of all people, refuse a preferential option for amnesty, given that "[God] forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:13-14)?

To be clear: One cannot translate a rich theological truth—no matter how splendid—straight into public policy. We live in a fallen world, and yes, we need law and order for society to work. But every society needs more than law and order. Any society worth its salt also needs to practice mercy. Because in the end, the basic law of the universe is mercy.

We, of all people, should know that. CT



Evangelicals, and the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities) avoids it like the Ebola virus. Even the President distanced himself from it, saying that giving legal status and work permits to nearly 5 million immigrants is "certainly not amnesty, no matter how often critics say it."

Why are so many of us frightened of *amnesty*—defined as "a general pardon for offenses, especially political offenses, against a government"—for illegal immigrants?

Opponents of Obama's recent order lament a disregard for "the rule of law." As Kansas' secretary of state—a devout Baptist and ardent opponent of immigration reform—put it, "I believe in rules and fairness. . . . We can argue it a million ways, but really, what more is there to say?" The argument continues: If we pardon illegal immigrants, law and order

'danger to separation of powers' that 'should be unconstitutional.'" Tooley's argument concludes: If the President gets away with this, we will no longer have the rule of law, but the rule of one man.

Amnesty has been granted rarely in American history—with results more benign than some might imagine. The first amnesty was offered by President George Washington, in 1795, to participants in the Whiskey Rebellion in exchange for their signatures on an oath of loyalty to the United States. Three years after the Civil War, President Andrew Johnson proclaimed unconditional amnesty to all Confederates.

Similarly, in 1977, President Jimmy Carter issued a broad amnesty to Vietnam draft evaders. Carter argued that their crimes were forgiven. This made clear the purpose of an amnesty: not to erase a criminal act or to condone it, but

\_\_\_\_

#### HER.MENEUTICS

Liuan Chen Huska is a freelance writer fascinated by social and cultural change. She lives in the Chicago area.



# Friends Only a Text Away

Technology keeps old pals close, but new ones may be waiting next door.

ore than one million young, college-educated Americans move across state lines each year, according to new research reported in *The New York Times*. I belong to this mobile generation, with each move forcing me to say goodbye to pals from childhood, college, graduate school, and beyond.

I am grateful to have several friends whom I consider kindred spirits—who I can call up at any time and talk to about anything, who listen closely, care deeply, and pray unceasingly for me.

Every single one of these friends lives out of state.

Because of cell phones and constant Internet access, that distance doesn't matter as much as it once might have. Friends message urgent prayer requests and updates. Through social media, we can keep up with some of the more mundane aspects of each other's daily lives.

When psychologists and anthropologists investigate how modern technology affects our relationships, they often note the sheer number of "friends"—the average person on Facebook has 338. And they look at ways social media help to create an ever-widening network of shallow virtual connections and acquaintances.

Yet for people like me, social media let us keep certain people as part of our inner circle despite the distance, thus diverting our energy away from newer, in-person acquaintances. In a paradox of the times, technology has helped this generation maintain emotionally close, long-distance friends while staying emotionally distant from local friends. We can keep the friends we found in college and graduate school as we move to different locations seeking

jobs. Though we may make new friends locally, technology enables us to fall back on old friends far away when crises hit. Quick texts or status updates often stand in for embodied, face-to-face interactions.

Increased mobility also makes many in my cohort hesitant to prioritize friendships with our neighbors and local peers. Who knows when we might move again? It's easier just to keep up with the people who go way back with us, carrying them with us wherever we go.

Technology presents a Faustian bargain, though. While we gain the ability to keep long-distance friends close through emailing, texting, and social media—a more immediate, constant form of connection than the letters and phone calls earlier generations relied on—we can easily miss out on other forms of community.

In its best moments, the local church is the community where we can be fully known yet fully loved. But if young believers are already receiving our emotional and spiritual support from long-distance friends, we may look less to our local sisters and brothers in Christ. Some of us opt to be just "somewhat known," a familiar

The call to local community isn't only for the good of our neighbors, but for our own good too—particularly in the digital age.

face at worship and small group. We may not make ourselves available when fellow church members need us.

The call to local community isn't only for the good of our neighbors, but for our own good too—particularly in the digital age. We enjoy a unique closeness and accountability from the people who see us in person on a regular basis. In these relationships, I've discovered an even more authentic bond: I cannot chose to withdraw by refusing to return a call or text. I have to face my flaws, exposed before another, and in this setting, I've experienced true grace as well.

I know God calls me to commit to the place where he has planted me now—so he can use friends both far *and* near to reveal my heart and show his grace to me. God told the Israelite exiles in Babylon to build houses, plant gardens, marry and have children, and seek the welfare of the city where he had sent them (Jer. 29).

These activities provide for the flourishing of our communities as well as forcing us to make connections with the people who live around us. God uses such relationships to foster spiritual growth, even in places where we feel like exiles.

Sadly, the busy schedules of many young Christians don't often lend themselves to rhythms of shared daily life where open-hearted fellowship can emerge. Which is why, in some ways, technology is a blessing, allowing us to maintain enduring friendships across the miles. But as we do so, let's not miss out on what God has for us here and now. If we make an effort to reach out and be present locally, we may be surprised to find kindred spirits right next door. **CT** 

# After domestic violence, why should a Christian wife call the police, not a pastor, first?

Addressing a sin that at some point afflicts 1 in 4 US women.



# Tawana Davis To Stop the Hurt

astors like me often want to solve others' problems. We want to fix it, make it better, and help. We provide guidance through our own lens of experience, responding with empathetic listening, awareness, and patience.

A late bloomer to pastoring, I responded to the call to ordained ministry at age 36. Before then, from outward appearances, I had it all: a great job, home, car, and two beautiful children. Yet I was broken and needed healing.

In my brokenness, my husband became my protection. I created a false sense of happiness amid his controlling behavior. Verbal abuse turned into emotional, spiritual, and physical abuse in a matter of months.

Despite the violence, I wanted to fix my husband, so we went to counseling. We met with my pastor, a young man who was married with one child. Not understanding the persistent nature of domestic violence, my pastor spoke from his own limited experience, saying, "If he doesn't stop, tell him he will have to leave, or you will call the authorities." (Even though you never bargain with an abuser.)

In my ignorance, I followed his advice. It almost got me killed. My husband attacked me in our home. I thought I was going to die as he held his 220-pound body on top of mine. I realized a cell phone was nearby and was able to flip it open and hold number 9, the quickest way to dial 9-1-1.

The dispatcher sent the authorities to our home. My husband was arrested and later sentenced to jail. In the midst of all this, my pastor wanted to help but did not have the tools to do so. Once my husband was in jail, I relocated to Atlanta to attend seminary full-time. There, in 2008, a revelation hit me in the midst of my pastoral care and counseling course: I had been a victim of domestic violence. The tears streamed down my face. The community embraced me. From that point on, I attended a weekly support group.

For the protection of the victim and those around her or him, it is vitally important that wives call the authorities immediately after violent abuse. But do more than make phone calls. Take photos of injuries, get witnesses, and obtain an order of protection. According to the FBI, more than 90 percent of domestic abuse cases never go to trial, often because there is not enough physical evidence.

I have written elsewhere about my transition from victim to survivor. I stress the

importance of postabuse reconciliation through Christ for all family members. Talking about domestic violence brings awareness to victims, survivors, pastors, laypeople, family, and friends. The authorities respond according to the law. But well-informed pastors can offer much more after the violence: long-term spiritual and emotional support to the survivor.

**TAWANA DAVIS** is executive minister of Shorter Community AME Church, Denver.

## Owen Strachan To Punish Wrongdoers

pousal abuse is not only an abstract wrong but also a sin at a cosmic level. The husband who abuses his wife images Satan, not Jesus. Satan wants to destroy the church. Christ wants to protect it.

If a man fails in his God-given role and abuses his wife, she should make two calls, one right after the other. First, she should call the police. The civic ruler, Paul says, acts as an "avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer" (Rom. 13:4, ESV). When churches teach otherwise, they not only fail to provide psychological and emotional care, they also fail theologically. Divine vengeance cries out to be exercised against evil. We must not restrain what God has loosed.

Next, the woman should call her pastor. The pastor should contact church elders to provide her with maximal care. The church acts in this way because it recognizes that Jesus never harms his bride. As her head, he laid down his life for her at the Cross, washing away her sin (Eph. 5:25–26). Men who justify evil by citing texts are twisting God's Word, abusing Scripture as they abuse others. Jesus used his body to bless us. Likewise, husbands must use their bodies to strengthen, never weaken, their wives.

Once engaged, the church provides care to the woman even as it takes steps to formally discipline the man (Matt. 18:15–20). This process, of course, means that churches need a meaningful membership process, as the apostolic church had (1 Cor. 5:12–13).

There is no tension between church and state here. As Augustine taught, Christians are citizens of two cities: the city of man, under the oversight of the state, and the city of God, under the oversight

of the church. Jesus rules over both but delegates different authorities for each city (Matt. 22:21). One orders society and punishes evil; the other orders spiritual life and preaches Christ.

We see in this dual response to evil how much God hates it. People who abuse others merit punishment from both state and church. Too often, church leaders haven't engaged either of these methods of justice. Women suffer in silence, and the church may sweep evil under the rug. God intends to deal justice to the wrongdoer in two ways, but the person suffering abuse too often ends up without any justice at all.

To correct this pattern, elders must know and shepherd church members. Spiritual anonymity is the close friend of sin. Church membership is its dread foe. Fighting a culture of abuse means fighting a culture of anonymity. Further, elders must teach husbands the showstopping truth of marriage: in every respect, it embodies the gospel; headship means self-sacrificial leadership in the image of Christ. It means giving your body for your wife's benefit (Eph. 5:28). It means loving her so much that you would never lift a hand against her. It means, if necessary, gladly dying before she comes to harm.

Of all the moral considerations opposing abuse, there is no greater enemy of domestic abuse than this: Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.

**OWEN STRACHAN,** president of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, is author of the forthcoming book *The Colson Way*.

#### Lindsey and Justin Holcomb To End the Abuse Cycle

ollowing an act of violent abuse, a Christian wife should first turn to the police. We definitely support calling her pastor, too, but only after calling the police.

"Violent abuse" refers to physical assault or battering, which is a crime. The police have the power to protect victims from physical attack. And victims of violent abuse have the right to protect themselves and any children involved.

The police are the best first responders because they understand that an act of violence is a crime. They understand

that without proper intervention, this crime will most likely occur again. It is rare for pastors and their churches to have relationships with a domestic violence shelter, the police, or the public health department. What a Christian wife needs after an act of violent abuse is immediate intervention, emergency shelter, medical care, and legal support.

About one in four American women experiences violence from her partner at some point in her adult life, according to credible national surveys. And research shows that Christian women stay far longer in the abusive context and withstand far more severe abuse than non-Christian women.

One researcher states, "A woman is hit an average of 35 times before she calls the police, and she will leave her abuser 5 or 6 times before she leaves for good." Psychologist Lenore Walker writes, "Women with strong religious backgrounds often are less likely to believe that violence against them is wrong." Abused women who are Christians may try to understand their suffering by believing it is "God's will" or "part of God's plan for my life." Yet we believe this runs contrary to the biblical image of a kind, merciful, and loving God who promises to be present to us in our suffering.

A Bureau of Justice Statistics survey concluded that women who reported their abuse to authorities were far less likely to be assaulted again than women who submitted to the abuse and did not contact the authorities. Specifically, the survey found that 41 percent of wives who did not report their abusive husbands to the police were attacked again within 6 months. By contrast, only 15 percent of abused wives who reported the abuse to authorities were assaulted again.

The justice system is not an absolute guarantee. But if an abused wife is honest and upfront about the danger her abuser poses, the police can be a key to safety. If she takes that first step, the police can offer her resources—including people to talk to and make plans with—that can make all the other steps easier. They've done it before. An abused wife is not alone. **CT** 

**LINDSEY AND JUSTIN HOLCOMB** are coauthors of *Is It My Fault? Hope and Healing for Those Suffering Domestic Violence.*Lindsey has worked as a case manager for victims of abuse. Justin is an Episcopal priest and professor of theology.

**Andrew Wilson** is an elder at Kings Church in Eastbourne, England, and author most recently of Unbreakable.



# That's the Spirit!

What Scripture and jazz music have in common.

ince the first century, Christians have claimed that the Bible is inspired by God. Nowadays, we use the word inspired for almost any creative feat—a poem, a song, a lecture, even a touchdown. While we use the word for things we think are outstanding, Christians traditionally used it to describe the divine authority of the Bible.

A classic text for discussing the inspiration of Scripture is 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is God-breathed." Here Paul uses the Greek word theopneustos, a compound of theos ("God") and pneo ("to blow or breathe"). In other words, men wrote the books, but they were inspired, in-Spirited, breathed out, by God. The words are human, but the breath is divine.

Paul saw it that way, and so did Peter (2 Pet. 1:21) and the Prophets, who frequently said things like "the word of the Lord came to me." That's how Jesus saw the nature of Scripture, too. The week before his crucifixion, Jesus asked the Pharisees: "Whose son is the Messiah?"

"Easy," they replied, "David's."

"Okay, but David, by the Spirit, calls the Messiah 'Lord.' How can the Messiah be his son?"

Silence. No one could answer. From then on, we are told, nobody dared to ask Jesus any more questions (Matt. 22:41–46).

Notice the way Jesus talks about the author of the Psalms: "David, by the Spirit." This, more clearly than anything else in the Gospels, shows how Jesus understood the inspiration of Scripture and the relationship between the human and divine authors. The text is both fully divine and fully human. It's not as if David were speaking just from his own viewpoint. But nor is it divine dictation, as if God proclaimed words that David slavishly copied down, or wrote words in the sky. Rather, it's inspiration: God working through the human. "David, by the Spirit."

This may seem strange, especially if we are used to thinking of the Bible's origin as either human or divine. But if we consider the language of inspiration-breath, wind, Spirit—then helpful illustrations abound. God is the wind: David is the sail. God is the breath; Moses is the balloon. God is the musician: Isaiah. Paul, and Peter are the various instruments he plays, each with its distinct sound.

Nobody listening to Louis Armstrong playing in a jazz club would have asked whether it was Louis or his trumpet making the music. The breath and tune came from Armstrong, but the trumpet was the instrument through which his breath flowed in order to become audible. Likewise, the biblical authors are instruments of revelation—a trumpet here and an oboe there-each making its own sound. But the musician, the skilled artist who fills them with his breath and ensures the tune is played correctly, is the Holy Spirit.

While this is an imperfect analogy, it resolves several difficult issues regarding the Bible's inspiration. First, it helps us

God is the musician; Isaiah, Paul, and Peter are the various instruments he plays, each with its distinct sound.

see that the divine and human aspects do not cancel each other out any more than Armstrong's musicianship cancels out the role played by his trumpet. And it's not as if the trumpet's role increases as the musician's role decreases. Nor is the sound 50 percent musician, 50 percent instrument. Far from it. The more inspiration the trumpet receives, the louder and more distinctively trumpet-like it becomes. It's not 50/50, but 100/100.

Second, it helps us understand some of the "clashes" in Scripture. Whatever you call them—tensions, contradictions, paradoxes, difficulties—certain texts in Scripture, undoubtedly, seem to pull in different directions: Paul and James, Luke and John, Samuel and Chronicles. Some interpreters think dissonance disproves divine inspiration: If the same God inspired all these texts, then they all should sound the same and never clash.

Not necessarily. Imagine you are listening to a talented jazz musician who can play multiple instruments and record them in layers. The instruments not only make different sounds but also play clashing notes, often for some time, resolving only later in the piece. If you had never heard jazz before, you might think the musician  $was incompetent when you \, heard \, a \, C\text{-}sharp$ clash with a D. But when you trust the musician knows what she's doing, you can enjoy the piece. You can assume she wanted you to hear both notes, recognize the clashes for what they are, and trust that they will resolve in the end.

that they will resolve in the end.

That's how I read the Bible. It is difficult yet beautiful, puzzling yet coherent, God-breathed and glorious. And it all highlights the excellence of the one whose breath fills its pages. It is inspired  $\frac{1}{2}$ and true, like jazz.



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#### THE BIBLE. WE WANT EVERYONE TO GET IT.



\* And learn to love them instead

Millennial anxiety sabotages attempts to engage the next generation.

Dietrich
Bonhoeffer
explains why.

By **Andrew Root** 

we are certainly concerned about millennials.

It began about the time this age cohort reached adulthood, with the 1999
publication of Saving the Millennial Generation: New Ways to Reach the Kids You
Care About in These Uncertain Times.
It accelerated when some polls in the
mid-2000s began to suggest millennials'
waning interest in church. Enter "millennials and church" into a search engine,
and soon enough you are pointed to sites
that proclaim, "Ten reasons churches
are not reaching millennials," or, "Why
millennials are leaving church." The latter
article quickly garnered some 100,000
page views not long ago.

This past October, the 2014 Alignment Conference featured Barna's David Kinnaman and pastor and church planter Dave Ferguson talking about millennials, who present a "game changing moment" for the church. Gen2 Leadership Conference is meeting this month with the theme, "Fighting for the Heart of the Millennial Generation."

We find ourselves facing into "millennial anxiety" as well as concern about the "rise of the nones" (those who do not identify with any religious tradition, a cohort that is apparently growing in the West). Like some reverse Paul Revere, many ride through the fiber optics of the Internet and into church basements shouting, "The millennials are leaving! Watch out for the rise of the nones!" Simply put, millennial anxiety—a concern shared by both mainline and evangelical churches—is the fear that those between ages 18 and 25 have little interest in the church, and that the church has failed to convince them to stay.

As a professor of youth ministry and theology, I suppose this is my time to shine. I should stoke the flames of millennial anxiety, preaching afresh how important youth ministry is, urging that if we don't offer some new, culturally sensitive initiative, the future of the church hangs in the balance. Or I might become a booster, pointing to

the counterevidence that, while some millennials are leaving the church, according to studies by LifeWay Research and Barna Group, many others are as faithful as ever. To do that, of course, would only reinforce millennial anxiety by locating the focus of our anxiety on the next generation.

Instead, I find myself moved in another direction. I wonder if millennial anxiety is about our concern for real young people, or if it's about the church's desire to possess a youthful spirit. Do we want departing millennials and nones to encounter the gospel—or to merely become members? Are we worried more about their spiritual health or about the health of our institutions?

Over the past several months, as I finished writing a book on the youth and children's ministry of 20th-century theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, I've had the chance to rethink the church's approach to millennials. Bonhoeffer scholars and others have often overlooked the fact that most of Bonhoeffer's ministry from 1925 to 1939 was among children and youth. In fact, many of Bonhoeffer's most creative theological periods coincided with his direct interactions with children. For this reason, he provides a fountain of theological and practical wisdom that can free us from our own millennial anxiety and help us offer something of lasting value to our young people.

## YOUTH PASTOR DOING THEOLOGY

ONHOEFFER ENTERED children's ministry in Grunwalde as he typed the first pages of his doctoral dissertation. Sanctorum Communio is laced with rich comments, rarely unpacked, about baptism and the church community "carrying" its youth. Bonhoeffer focused on young people during his internship in Barcelona as well as in Harlem, where he taught Sunday school to African American children in the Abyssinian Baptist Church. Even his deeply

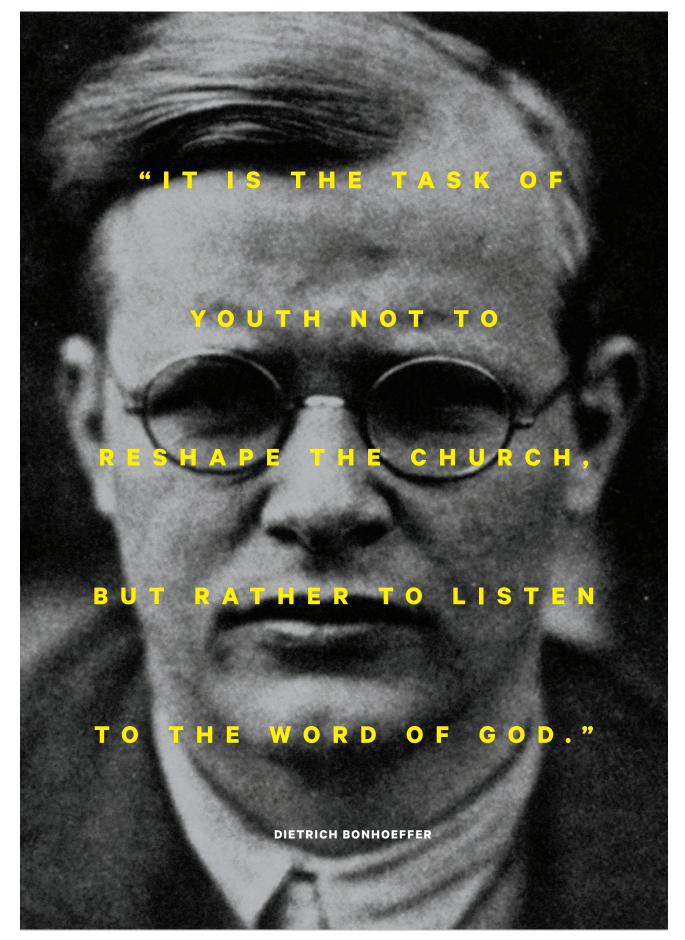
philosophical thesis for his habilitation (the highest academic qualification in many European countries) concludes with a section on children.

In the mid-1930s, Bonhoeffer sketched important lectures that became pieces such as "Christ the Center" and "Creation and Fall." During this period, he was elected as secretary to youth in the ecumenical movement. He also taught a confirmation class that was so rowdy, the older pastor leading the group had a heart attack not long after Bonhoeffer took over. Yet while balancing ecumenical work, university lectures, and preaching at the technical college, the youth ministry-the confirmation class-most deeply engaged Bonhoeffer. Even as the Nazis moved into power, Bonhoeffer wrote and presented lectures such as, "The Younger Generation's Conception of the Fuhrer." Because of this, I argue that Bonhoeffer is primarily not a theologian doing youth ministry, but a youth minister doing theology.

Bonhoeffer's era was not that different from ours-at least not when it came to anxiety over youth. In the 1880s, a national youth movement called Wandervogel ("rambling" or "hiking") had sprung up within Germany's middle class. Young people, frustrated and disengaged, decided it was time for adventure, so they gathered to wander the forests of central Europe. Like some 1980s Coke commercial, they congregated in suburban neighborhoods to walk, sing, then camp in the forests and countryside. The youth hostel, now ubiquitous in cities throughout Europe, was created to give young people a safe destination outside the city.

In the ensuing decades, the *Wandervogel* took new shape, but its spirit had permeated German culture. By the 1930s, everyone, especially Christians, was worried about the young and debated how to keep them involved, connected, and motivated in all sectors of society.

This was the context for Bonhoeffer's only public radio address, "The Younger



# WHY BLACK CHURCHES ARE KEEPING MILLENNIALS



The reasons are rooted in history. By Morgan Lee

**SHOULD BLACKS BE** counted as millennials?

That's the question Thabiti Anyabwile, an African American pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church, asks when handwringing commences about young people leaving US churches

"Researchers describe millennials as a fairly privileged and special group, which is so far from the reality of so many African Americans," said Anyabwile. "When it comes to describing broad demographic trends, you're woefully in danger of building a profile based on the assumed normative experiences of majority culture."

At large, millennials are less religious than were earlier generations of Americans. In 2012, Pew Research Center released data showing that 32 percent of Americans ages 18 to 29 are religiously unaffiliated. This was an 11 percent increase over any other age group that year, and a 7 percent jump from the 25 percent of young people who responded this way in 2007.

Yet a deeper dive into Pew's study suggests whites are overrepresented among those who are not religiously affiliated. Anglos make up 66 percent of the US population, yet they compose 71 percent of those with no religious affiliation. In contrast, blacks make up 11 percent of the population but only 9 percent of the so-called "nones."

Black Protestants have retained the greatest number of millennials compared with Catholics, white mainliners, and white evangelicals, according to 2012 data from the Center for Public Religion. These traditions have seen their market share of millennials drop by 8.4, 7.3, and 2.2 percentage points, respectively. In contrast, black Protestant millennials have decreased by 1.5 percentage points.

The black church's unique history and culture help to explain why it is keeping

millennials while other traditions are losing them. In the Antebellum Era, the black church was a place of "communal and spiritual encouragement" for slaves, says University of Albany professor Roxanne Booth. And during Jim Crow, the church was one of the few institutions that let blacks lead.

Consequently, the church "served more than a religion function," said apologetics pastor and researcher Carl Ellis. "There are institutional, social, and cultural reasons why people attend church. They're not all theological."

Today, while some blacks have further integrated into majority culture, many "still feel on the outskirts of community," said Bryant Parsons, a Trinidadian American MDiv student at Westminster Theological Seminary. "The church provides a safe haven."

"When you get to the black church, you're not always having to explain yourself," said Ellis. "It's the same phenomenon [as] why black kids sit together in the cafeteria. It's a place where . . . everyone knows where you're coming from."

That sense of sanctuary could be one reason why many, believers or not, are comfortable with overt expressions of Christianity in black culture.

As an undergraduate at Howard University, Parsons noted that the school's annual gospel homecoming concert was well received.

"You don't hear from any black atheists complaining, 'Why are we having a gospel concert? Why are we doing something so blatantly Christian?'" said Parsons.

Another reason why such expressions are permissible may be the black church's "distinct cultural expression."

"If blacks saw Christianity as the same [religion] whites practiced, they would probably feel more alienated from it," said Parsons, citing worship and preaching styles as examples where the traditions diverge. "Blacks don't fear that Christianity is the white man's religion."

But the black church's distinct cultural role may be changing. Anyabwile notes that more and more historically black churches are moving from urban to suburban areas in order to expand. This could create a "mismatch between where the churches are located and where much of this demographic lives," he said.

Another demographic challenge: the paucity of women in church leadership roles.

"Increasingly the creative leadership that is emerging in the church, emerges with women," said Willie Jennings, a Duke Divinity School professor. "But women seem to be locked out of significant leadership roles, especially in older, more established black churches."

Others share his concern. In a 2010 article, "The Black Church Is Dead," Princeton University professor Eddie S. Glaude Jr. said that the black church had lost touch with the affliction of the black community.

"We see organization and protests against same-sex marriage and abortion; even bill-boards in Atlanta [making] the antiabortion case," he wrote. "But where are the press conferences and impassioned efforts around black children living in poverty, and commercials and organizing around jobs and healthcare reform?"

Ekemini Uwan, a contributor for the Reformed African American Network, suggests this shared suffering traditionally has brought the church together. "People typically look for refuge in the education system, corporate America, or politics," she said. "Our lives have been rigged in such a way [that] we can't take refuge in these areas. We are constantly reminded this place is not our home."

Joy J. Moore, an associate dean at Fuller Theological Seminary, says the black church explains a worldview that aligns with the reality of its community.

"In the African American church, the narrative of Scripture has become our story. You know what you're facing when you encounter oppression, racism, and injustice Monday through Saturday, because you were given the capacity to recognize that oppression, racism, and injustice on Sunday," said Moore.

"Millennials are looking for the type of authenticity that lives beyond the worship hour."

Generation's Conception of the Leader." The fact that it was broadcast at all shows the prevailing anxiety over Germany's youth. Everyone within and outside the church wanted to know how to capture the spirit of the youth movement.

We in the United States are 50 years past our own national youth movement. Teenagers and young adults grew their hair long, tie-dyed their clothes, and wandered to Haight-Ashbury, singing the folk and rock songs of their movement. And like Germany in the early 20th century, our society and churches have been figuring out how to respond ever since. Like Germany, our response has shifted from outrage to conflict to acceptance and back again.

Germany's response in the mid-1930s was to glorify youth, to do whatever it could to assimilate them into its structures and institutions. The Nazis assumed power in part because they knew how to engage the young. But Nazis weren't the only group that sought to capture the spirit of youth. They were just the most successful.

#### YOUTH CANNOT SAVE THE CHURCH

N THE MIDST of this, Bonhoeffer wrote eight theses on youth work (I'll discuss only one here). We are not sure when they were written or why. But Bonhoeffer's thesis confronts and recasts our own millennial anxiety, shifting our perspective on youth ministry today.

Thesis One reads:

Since the days of the youth movement, church youth work has often lacked that element of Christian sobriety that alone might enable it to recognize that the spirit of youth is not the Holy Spirit and that the future of the church is not youth itself but rather the Lord Jesus Christ alone. It is the task of youth not to reshape the church, but rather to listen to the Word of God; it is the task of the church not to capture the youth, but to teach and proclaim the Word of God.

Bonhoeffer is direct and, as usual, passionate. Upon first read, no one would disagree. But his words reveal a hidden agenda: He was striving to shake up youth ministry and free the church from



BONHOEFFER WITH STUDENTS IN THE SPRING OF 1932

accommodating the youth movement.

Bonhoeffer knew that if the church of any age is to survive, it must disciple youth so that they constitute the church as they grow older. But he believed too many Germans thought the future of the church depended on getting spirited young people engaged in it.

Todaywe commonly justify youth work by reminding each other that youth are the future of the church, that we need them if the church is to survive and thrive. When such rhetoric becomes commonplace, Bonhoeffer believed, it means the spirit of youth has become more important to us than the work of the Holy Spirit. We talk as though the church's future depended not on the Spirit of Christ as much as on the spirit of the young.

Bonhoeffer called our fixation with youthfulness *idolatry*. He wanted to remind us that the future of the church does not depend on youth but only on Jesus Christ. He believed we can minister to youth only if our ministries are *not* about getting the spirit of young people into the church, but about encountering the Holy Spirit (especially through the Word of God) with young people in the

church community.

Bonhoeffer said youth ministry is first and foremost a theological task. It is not a sociological or cultural task or a church growth strategy. Of course, there are sociological and cultural factors to consider when ministering to youth. But Bonhoeffer would argue that youth ministry is first and foremost about the encounter of the divine with the human.

Again, who could disagree? Except that youth ministry today often puts theology on a back burner. Youth ministry in North America became full blown after a youth consumer culture emerged in the 1950s, and took shape in response to the mid-'60s youth countercultural movement. The binding of the counterculture youth movement with a consumer society (see Thomas Frank's book *The Conquest of Cool*) has embedded a "youthful spirit" deep within our cultural consciousness.

Different denominations and political camps have interpreted this spirited counterculture youth movement either romantically or immorally: Either a moribund church desperately needed to get young people for their spirit, or the

spirit of youth was corrupt and needed conversion. Either way, much of North American youth ministry was shaped by the desire to capture and use the spirit of youth.

In fact, our anxiety about millennials and "the rise of the nones" exists in part because youth ministry in North America has been so successful. We've done a relatively good job of capturing the youthful spirit of 12- to 17-year-olds. But since many young people leave the church when becoming young adults (as many studies show), Bonhoeffer is right: We've been too focused on the youthful spirit. The strategies that captured them as youth no longer hold. These young people experienced only rooms full of teenagers and not a community of faith that crosses generations, let alone a community that dwells together on the Word, one that encourages us to care for one another in our unique humanity.

In short, youth cannot save the church, for the church is not simply an institution that needs new members (even enthusiastic ones); the church is the body of Jesus Christ in the world.

#### MILLENNIALS AS PEOPLE FIRST

HILE FEW MIGHT disagree formally, this theological commitment rarely leads us to new youth ministry practices. North American youth ministry leaders often passionately say that loving the youthful spirit is exactly where it all starts. "Youth ministry is about loving kids," they plead at conferences. Blogs tout the spirit of millennials, as per one recent post: "I am very passionate about the millennial generation. I know much has been said pessimistically about this generation, but I hold to the belief that the millennials are poised to change the culture for the good in this country and impact the world."

But this love is rarely driven by theological concerns as much as by ministry goals that treat youth as a project. One millennial writing for OnFaith reacted to an all-too-common expression—"As youth group leaders, we're just here to love on those kids"—saying, "It may just be semantics, but being *loved on* feels very different than being simply *loved*. The former connotes a sudden flash of contrived kindness; the latter is simpler ...

but deeper. It suggests that the relationship is the point, not the act of love itself."

Of course, we needn't stop loving young people. Bonhoeffer did not say that concern for youth is bad. It is actually of utmost importance. The problem in the millennial conversation is that we are tempted to move away from loving and encountering concrete persons who happen to be (so-called) millennials, and instead chase after an abstract collective called "the millennial generation." In loving the youthful spirit of millennials, we actually love not the young person in his or her particularity; instead, we love what having the young person's youthful spirit in our churches can get us. We love the idea of having millennials in our church, but may not be ready to love the particular young people that come to us in their concrete humanity.

Bonhoeffer was particularly sensitive to this. He saw how the National Socialists used the spirit of the youth movement for their own gain, without much concern for the youth themselves. They wanted young people's passion without their humanity.

Instead, the church that truly seeks to invite and welcome the young is driven not by youth at all, but by the desire to discover the revelation of Jesus Christ in the concrete and lived experience of young people. We invite them to struggle, along with the rest of the church, to discern the presence of Christ in their midst.

For instance, I know of a church that for many years lived with millennial anxiety, pleading with young people to read their Bibles, hoping their youthful spirit would avoid corruption and find a home in the church. The church invested money and resources to this end, seeking new programs and strategies every year.

Then one of the ministers realized that they were working so hard to get young people to read their Bibles, no other adults from the congregation were reading the Bible with them. So instead of looking for the next curriculum or program, the leader created a space for youth (ages 14 to 22) to read the Bible with older members of the congregation (even up to age 82). Each week, in groups made up equally of the young and the older, they read two chapters of the Gospels and then discussed three questions: What do you find interesting? What is confusing? And where are you in this text?

In such reading groups, the young were no longer "millennials" or young bodies that represented "the spirit of youth," but concrete persons. And the not-so-young were no longer those anxious to capture the youthful spirit as much as those seeking with concrete young people to dwell in the Word and encounter the Holy Spirit.

#### NEITHER MILLENNIAL NOR BOOMER

HIS IS BUT one example of what youth ministry inspired by Bonhoeffer might look like. There are surely others, many of which we've not even imagined yet, partly because we're stuck in a paradigm created by millennial anxiety.

But our ministry with youth cannot be about getting millennials to come and stay so that they might do good things or revitalize the church or even evangelize the world. If these things happen, we rejoice. But as Bonheoffer articulates in this first thesis, the church's ministry to the young is primarily about encountering the living Word of God in the context of the whole church. If acts of justice, church revival, and evangelism are to happen, they will not run on the gas of youthfulness. If they happen, it will be the act of God through the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit calls young people to love the world as they are loved by Jesus Christ in the context of the whole church.

Anxiety always obscures and corrupts our ability to share in each other's lives. Thus, the best way to help the church engage millennials is to stop wringing our hands over the millennial problem. Instead, we might seek the Holy Spirit together with all generations, looking for concrete experiences of the presence and absence of God in the lives of the young, confessing our confusion and telling our own stories of God's work in our lives. That's when the Holy Spirit binds and unites us, calling us beyond our generational divides. For in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, millennial nor boomer.

**ANDREW ROOT** is the Olson Baalson Associate Professor of Youth and Family Ministry at Luther Seminary. He has written a number of books on youth ministry and practical theology, including *Christopraxis* (Fortress Press) and *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker* (Baker Academic).



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#### BY LAURA JOYCE DAVIS

N MAY 2010, Shannon Sedgwick Davis flew to South Africa to meet with the Elders, a non-profit founded by Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Kofi Annan, and Jimmy Carter to bring peace to places of violence. She had been asked to join the Elders' advisory board in 2007—an offer you don't turn down, Davis said.

As she walked beside one of her heroes, she asked whether or not she should pursue Joseph Kony. The Ugandan warlord has, in the past two decades, abducted tens of thousands of children, forced them to slaughter their own families and friends, and then enlisted them in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), his

rebel army of child soldiers.

"Shannon, this one is clear," her mentor said without pausing. "This one is black and white."



# "WE REPRESENT LESS THAN 5 PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION. WE ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY BLESSED, AND WE HAVE LIVED IN A FAIRLY PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS TIME. IT IS FOR THIS REASON WE HAVE SUCH AN EXTRAORDINARY RESPONSIBILITY."

#### SHANNON SEDGWICK DAVIS

For Davis, 39, the fight against Kony has long been a matter of passion and principle. Back in 2000, at the start of her legal career, Davis was drawn to social justice advocacy. That year, she began working for International Justice Mission (IJM), arguably the most acclaimed Christian human-rights organization today. At IJM, she did everything from fundraising to assisting victims to spearheading the Emmy-winning "Children for Sale" segment that aired on *Dateline NBC*.

Next, she worked for two foundations that funded groups like IJM: first as vice president of Geneva Global, now as CEO of the Bridgeway Foundation, the charitable arm of investment firm Bridgeway Capital Management (which has \$4 billion under management). Based in Houston, the foundation gives half its after-tax profits to organizations working to protect human rights and stop genocide.

Davis first learned about Kony when Invisible Children, a nonprofit founded expressly to end LRA atrocities, sought Bridgeway funding for its 2006 short film. *Invisible Children: Rough Cut* tells the story of three Americans who travel to northern Uganda and witness firsthand the destruction caused by Kony and his followers.

"Our mission statement has in it 'a world without genocide,'" Davis said. After meeting the founders of Invisible Children, "I realized we weren't doing that. We were doing a lot of amazing things, but we weren't stopping war—we were just picking up the pieces. I went to the board and said, 'We need to mean what we say in our mission statement or change our mission statement.'"

While Davis was charting a career path that led directly to Kony, Kony was

finding his own life purpose: to create a rebel force so horrific it would rip apart Uganda from the inside.

#### VIOLENT 'HEALER'

Kony grew up in a devout Catholic family in northern Uganda, often called "Acholiland" for the Acholi tribe—Kony's tribe. Kony was reportedly a timid child who didn't like to fight. He served as an altar boy at the local chapel, where he was fascinated by hymns and rituals.

In the mid-1980s, Kony briefly joined a rebel movement against President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, who had continued the tradition of treating the northern tribes as second-class citizens. It was a tradition that began in the late 19th century, when British colonizers put southern Ugandans in charge of the central African country's finances, agriculture, and education. This colonialist arrangement led to economic disparity, deep racial tensions, and widespread violence between the north and south.

Shortly after Kony's stint in the rebel group, he fell ill and was diagnosed by a witch doctor with possession by an ancestral spirit. The Acholi believe in two options for people like Kony: have the spirit exorcised, or call in a more powerful witch doctor to install a spirit of healing. Kony's family chose the latter, and from that point on Kony was known as a healer.

In 1986, Alice Auma (also an alleged healer and prophetess, as well as believed to be Kony's cousin) rallied thousands of Acholis who disapproved of Museveni's rule. Her Holy Spirit Movement rebel group failed, and Kony used the opportunity to recruit the rebels for his own army.

By 1991, Kony's rebels had taken control of Acholiland and were feared for their ruthlessness. That spring, Museveni's government launched a five-year effort to reclaim the north. When Kony's fellow Acholis began turning on him, Kony maimed members of his own tribe whom he suspected of being informants, cutting off ears, lips, and limbs, and citing Mark 9 as justification.

During failed peace talks with Museveni in 1994, a young Kony compared himself to Jesus Christ and Muhammad, and began preaching his own religion—a hybrid of Christianity, Acholi tribal religion, and Islam. He said he was under divine orders to keep killing until either Uganda was ruled by the Ten Commandments or Museveni was overthrown.

When he could no longer recruit Acholis, Kony began kidnapping the tribe's children, who were easier to manipulate and threaten. He routinely forced them to kill their own parents and to bludgeon other children to death. Disobedience resulted in being tortured or killed; compliance functioned as an initiation rite. According to Human Rights Watch, the LRA abducted at least 20,000 children and murdered tens of thousands of Ugandan civilians between 1987 and 2006.

Since 2005, as global resistance has grown, Kony and the LRA have left Uganda and scattered to the jungles of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic, and South Sudan, leaving behind them a bloody trail. One such incident was in December 2008, when the LRA attacked villages in the northern DRC and South Sudan, killing 865 civilians over the Christmas holiday, according to Human Rights Watch.

#### NO OTHER OPTIONS

Even before Davis and her team funded Invisible Children's 2006 film, they had supported other anti-LRA movements in the region, including United Movement to End Child Soldiering, Human Rights Watch, and Resolve Uganda. Stopping Kony seemed the most direct and urgent way to bring peace to a nation riddled by violence.

After the 2008 Christmas massacres, partner NGOS in the region told Davis and her team that they had reason to suspect 2009 would bring more end-of-year carnage. Along with undertaking a 38-day fast, Davis hired an international security adviser to survey the region, research how best to warn civilians, and report patterns in violence. When Christmas 2009 passed without news of destruction or upheaval, Bridgeway celebrated, thinking their efforts had paid off.

But a visit to the DRC the following spring revealed the wreckage of a 4-day bloodbath in which the LRA abducted 250 people (including 80 children) and killed more than 300 civilians. Victims were tied to trees and hacked to death with machetes and axes.

Devastated, Davis realized she had to do more. Multiple government officials and NGOS informed Bridgeway about a missing link in their strategy: training Uganda's army. Its military lacked the guerrilla warfare training necessary to track Kony and his soldiers, many of whom were children and considered brainwashed abductees. Bridgeway also learned that remote villages needed a good communication system to warn each other of impending danger.

Bridgeway provided improved local communications systems quickly. Teams set up radios throughout the region and worked with Invisible Children to develop the Crisis Tracker, which uses radio towers and NGO networks to immediately alert villagers of attacks.

"Icontacted the State Department and Human Rights Watch and others for advice, but I also did a lot of soul searching," Davis said. "It was not easy. There wasn't much of a road map for this type of intervention. It's important to understand we didn't pursue this strategy over other options. We pursued this strategy after exhausting what we believed to be all known options.

"It was complicated ethically and politically, but it was clear to us that there were ethical problems in *not* acting. Every day that clicked by was another day of

horror for those being affected."

Their vision refocused, Bridgeway's strategy was threefold: rescue child soldiers, prevent future abductions and violence, and train Uganda's military to fight strategically and find Kony.

Davis began meeting with General Aronda Nyakairima, until recently the chief of all Ugandan defense forces. He agreed to form a Special Operations Group (sog) to be trained under Eeben Barlow, cofounder of the South African private military contractor Executive Outcomes. Somewhat controversially, Barlow and his company had hired themselves out in the 1990s to help end the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Angola, successful missions that gave them access to land and natural resources. For Bridgeway's mission, though, Barlow didn't want a fee.

Early on, Bridgeway kept quiet about funding the soc training. According to Davis, they saw their role as a small one and didn't want to be in the spotlight when Ugandans were giving everything for the cause. But in 2013, *The Washington Post* got wind of Bridgeway's efforts.

"Once the story broke, we chose to be open about what we had done and invested in," Davis said. "The experts were right: training for those forces was a huge missing piece of the puzzle. The results have proven that to be the case."

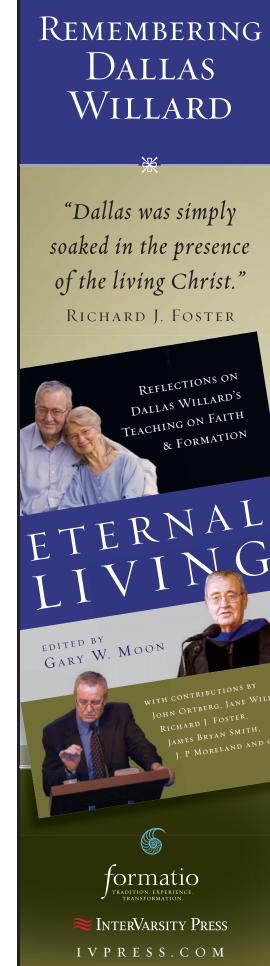
Since 2012, LRA violence has dropped by 93 percent. In 2013 alone, Kony's army lost at least 32 of an estimated 200 fighters at the beginning of the year; 16 soldiers defected, and another 16, including 4 senior officers, were captured or killed. Last year brought the biggest returns yet, with more than 500 returnees to date, including at least 172 women and children.

"One of the sad things is how quickly it did get better as soon as we got involved," Davis said. "We should have shown up a long time ago."

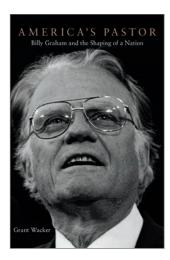
But Davis insists the credit goes to the Ugandans—not to her, Bridgeway, or the United States.

"We never want our role to be talked about in any way that [doesn't] truthfully present who the real heroes are," said Davis. "The Ugandans are out there every day [and] have lost their lives in terrible ways. Their unbreakable spirits and willingness to fight against a perpetrator who hasn't been on their soil since 2005 is pretty remarkable.

"Some of these guys have been deployed for four years. A lot of them . . .



### **#** Harvard



#### America's Pastor

Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation

**Grant Wacker** 

#### A BOOKLIST TOP 10 RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY BOOK OF THE YEAR

"Wacker examines not so much what Graham did as how he did it—a matter of manners and management as much as of vision and talent...If a great subject deserves a great book, Billy Graham has one."

-Booklist (starred review)

"In this elegantly written and compulsively readable account, Wacker ... probes the ways that Graham touched so many so deeply while aiming to provide the moral voice for a nation. Interweaving biography with social and intellectual history, Wacker suggests that Graham's brilliance shone brightly from his many facets—preacher, pastor, Southerner, and entrepreneur."

-Publishers Weekly

"We emerge with a more complete, nuanced understanding of Graham's personality and ministry ... Also shows us a profoundly authentic Graham, a true believer, a man who was not mercenary, who practiced what he preached."

-Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

Belknap Press \$27.95

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS www.hup.harvard.edu

had family members killed by Kony. For them it's personal."

Indeed, Ugandans have given Davis the most insight into a conflict that can seem unending. Davis, herself a mother of two young boys, listened to the mother of an LRA soldier sing to her child through an airborne helicopter loudspeaker, *Ilove you, I forgive you*, urging him to defect. Davis has watched Ugandan leaders embrace LRA defectors—the same rebels who in many cases killed their family members—saying, "Welcome home, brother. Let's go have some tea."

When Davis asks them how they can forgive, sog troops say that when the alternative is continued war, forgiveness is the only option. Uganda is 84 percent Christian; Davis believes many Ugandans understand grace in a way that evades Christians in more privileged contexts.

"We have so much to learn," Davis said. "We are more educated and better fed, but in this way, they've got us beat. Where does that come from? I want to have some of that."

Davis said this grace is the single best entry point for former soldiers to regain some of their innocence.

"They have a huge uphill battle. Some of them have been with the LRA for decades. Many of them were forced to kill their parents or other villagers and then to mindlessly kill and abduct and loot—completely counter to the way a child would normally behave."

Davis (who grew up having a youth director mother and now attends a non-denominational church in San Antonio) says faith has guided her in times when she's witnessed horrific suffering.

"If I viewed my work through an agnostic lens, I would have a much harder time getting out of bed in the morning," she said. "Yes, we have what some might call 'impossible' assignments. But when looked at in light of what I believe about God and the goodness with which we have all been created, those assignments seem worthwhile—and achievable."

#### AFRICAN SISTER

Kony is still out there, suspected to be hiding along the Sudan–South Sudan border, a hard-to-reach locale for troops. But LRA defectors report he is no longer able to operate on the scale he used to. Kony is welcome nowhere and is still actively being pursued.

In Central Africa, a region rife with conflict, Davis and her team are welcomed by countries unified in their desire to end Kony's reign. But Davis says it has never just been about a hunt for one man.

"It's about showing up for our brothers and sisters who have been suffering," Davis said. When she first began working with sog troops, she was *mzungu* ("white woman"); now she is "African sister."

"If Kony is out there to the last of his days but the atrocities have ended, that's still a success. But I also believe it would be a tremendous contribution if he were captured and brought to the ICC [International Criminal Court]. I want that for the victims."

These days, Davis spends 70 percent of her time on the Kony mission while juggling parenting and serving on the boards of multiple organizations, including Humanity United, TOMS, and Charity:Water. Often she feels like she lives between two worlds—one where children need carpools to swimming or basketball practice, another where children have survived by eating plant roots while waiting to be rescued. Last summer she began to bridge the gap by taking her sons to Rwanda for two months while she worked in the field.

"As Americans, we represent less than 5 percent of the world's population. We are disproportionately blessed, and we have lived in a peaceful and prosperous time. For this reason we have such an extraordinary responsibility," Davis said. She holds fast to Matthew 25:35–40 and a Dietrich Bonhoeffer quote:

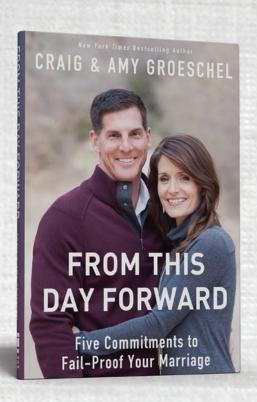
We are not simply to bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice; we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.... Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.

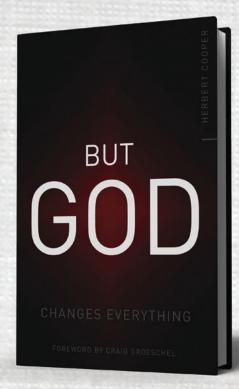
"When we allow ourselves to be present enough to . . . let some of these tragedies take residence in our hearts, it helps us see all of the places in our lives where we can contribute," said Davis. "The opportunities are everywhere."

**LAURA JOYCE DAVIS** (no relation to Shannon) is an award-winning writer based in Oakland. She recently completed her first novel, inspired by her year working with victims of sex trafficking in the Philippines.

#### YOUR MARRIAGE. YOUR FAITH.

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STIANITY TODAY Plus: **Our choice** for Book of the Year. 45

ome books pull us deeper into familiar subjects—biographies of great statesmen, say, or fresh takes on doctrine and discipleship. Others introduce us to people, places, and ideas about which we know little. Last year, I finally discovered Laura Hillenbrand's epic World War II survival story, *Unbroken*. Going in, I'd never heard



of the indomitable prisoner of war Louis Zamperini. Now I won't soon forget him.

This year's awards feature books that both trod old paths and scout new ones. We honor a new study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, along with plenty of volumes touching on the Bible, the church,

and perennial matters of faith. But we also hope to inspire some readers to get to know abolitionists Hannah More and Sarah Grimke. as well as the philosopher Charles Taylor (and his penetrating look at our "secular age").

Whether you're browsing for something old or something new, we hope your curiosity is awakened. —Matt Reynolds, cT associate editor, books be of interest to students of the New Testament as well as anyone who takes an interest in the life of Jesus and the use of the New Testament in the early church." -Mary Veeneman, professor of theology. North Park University

AWARD OF MERIT

For the Glory

Recovering a

of Worship

DANIEL I. BLOCK

**BAKER ACADEMIC** 

"This splendid

volume is the culmi-

nation of an entire

career of studying

worship in the Old

Testament context.

What generations

of students have

teaching is now

the church) that

He explains how

available to all: the

rich mosaic of expe-

riences in Israel (and

define us as humans.

worship is done with

pastoral sensitivity,

theological insight,

and the wisdom of

reflects the virtues

a man whose life

he describes."

-Gary Burge,

College

professor of New

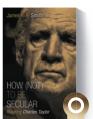
Testament, Wheaton

learned from Block's

**Biblical Theology** 

of God

#### **CHRISTIANITY** AND CULTURE



#### How (Not) to Be Secular **Reading Charles**

**Taylor** JAMES K. A. SMITH

**EERDMANS** "Taylor is the author of a monumental study of contemporary life called A Secular Age, unique challenges which explores the widespread loss of religious sensibility at Fare Forward in modern life. His work exposing the ideology of secularism has important implications for contemporary apol-

ogetics, evangelism, and ministry. But it's so technical and sophisticated that it is mainly accessible to academics. Here, Smith has offered not a CliffsNotes style simplification, but a paradigm-shifting book that creatively

and larger society." -Gene Edward Veith provost, Patrick Henry

College

applies Taylor's find-

ings to the church

#### AWARD OF MERIT

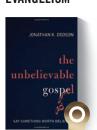
#### **Facing Leviathan**

Leadership, Influence, and Creating in a **Cultural Storm** MARK SAYERS

MOODY PUBLISHERS "Like Francis Schaeffer at his best. Sayers uses cultural observations. historical lessons, and pastoral wisdom to penetrate the various myths and lies our culture believes. He gives readers a set of pictures to better understand the gospel and the

facing the church." -Jake Meador, editor

#### APOLOGETICS/ **EVANGELISM**



#### The Unbelievable

#### Say Something **Worth Believing** JONATHAN K. DODSON

ZONDERVAN

Gospel

"Dodson rescues evangelism from the formulaic and trite recitation of biblical facts. re-centers it within the grand narrative of Scripture, and refocuses our attention on the particular needs of the person who needs good news. This is a biblically faithful and contextually sensitive approach to evangelism that systematically

#### demolishes the most common obstacles to proclaiming Jesus as Lord."

-Trevin Wax, managing editor of The Gospel Project

AWARD OF MERIT

Believe the Bible?

**Engagement with** 

An Evangelical

Contemporary

CRAIG L. BLOMBERG

"Although the title

might lead one to

beginner's book, it

is not. But neither

It is for those who

is it a book only for

seminary professors.

are ready to move on

from shelves full of

introductory "case

for" books to see

if the Bible (mainly

can stand up to

answers the

the New Testament)

scrutiny from critical

scholars. Blomberg

Questions

**BRAZOS PRESS** 

think this is a

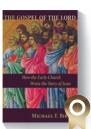
Can We Still

and gracious manner." -Craig Hazen,

toughest challenges

in an evenhanded

professor of apologetics, Biola University



#### The Gospel of the Lord

How the Early **Church Wrote** the Story of **Jesus** 

"This book covers the formation of the Gospels, asking and answering questions that have occupied undergraduate and seminary students

**EERDMANS** 

in fresh ways. It will

#### **BIBLICAL STUDIES**

MICHAEL F. BIRD

#### CHRISTIAN LIVING



#### **Teach Us to Want** Longing, Ambition,

and the Life of Faith JEN POLLOCK MICHEL INTERVARSITY PRESS "Most of us have wanted something at some point in life. Some of us live with a

deep void in our souls that never seems to be filled. How do we live with such desires? How do we respond to the emotions brought on by longing and wanting? With raw honesty about personal experiences and a scriptural foundation. Michel shows that our desires have a place in the journey of faith."

—Courtney Reissig, Her.meneutics writer

#### AWARDS OF MERIT (TIE)

#### Visions of Vocation

Common Grace for the Common Good STEVEN GARBER

INTERVARSITY PRESS

FICTION

"Many Christians struggle with envisioning what it is to be and to work in the world. Garber offers stories and wisdom that affirm the goodness and rightness of Christians pursuing callings in areas not traditionally considered ministry but that may be missional nonetheless." -Rachel Marie Stone blogger, author of Eat With Joy

#### If Only Letting Go of Regret

"The reader should not be fooled by the book's slender frame.

MICHELLE VAN LOON

Wise and insightful, If Only tackles a universally recognizable subject—regret—in muscular prose that expertly balances biblical and personal stories."

—Karen Swallow Prior, professor of English, Liberty University, and author of Fierce Convictions

# "STRANGE GLORY IS THE BEST BOOK IN ENGLISH ON BONHOEFFER."

DOUGLAS SWEENEY \_\_\_



#### THE CHURCH/ PASTORAL LEADERSHIP



#### Mission Drift

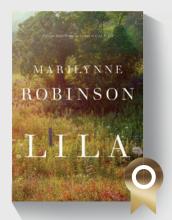
The Unspoken
Crisis Facing
Leaders, Charities,
and Churches
PETER GREER AND
CHRIS HORST

BETHANY HOUSE PUBLISHERS

"Greer and Horst identify the common—but not inevitable—tendency

of Christian organizations to slowly, often imperceptibly, lose focus on the purpose and values that first called them into existence. Writing from case studies and their own experiences in missions organizations, they not only describe the problem but also offer practical remedies." -Bill Teague, pastor, Langhorne Presbyterian Church (Langhorne,

#### PODINCON



#### Lila MARILYNNE ROBINSON

FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX

"Robinson slowly unfolds the story of Lila, a woman not quite defeated by a brutal, hardscrabble life, who discovers hope and security as the wife of an elderly pastor. Together, they wrestle with questions of the meaning of existence and the ultimate fate of humanity. Readers who loved Robinson's earlier novel, *Gilead*, will discover the same breathtaking writing, beautifully painted scenes, and strong working knowledge of theology."

—Cindy Crosby, author of By Willoway Brook

#### AWARD OF MERIT

The Invention of Wings

SUE MONK KIDD

VIKING ADULT

"Based on the life of abolitionist Sarah Grimke and a fictional slave girl, Handful, the novel skillfully joins fiction and history, African American resilience and Southern white hypocrisy, Charlestonian exuberance and Quaker idealism. Kidd reminds us that the foundation of social injustice is ordinary human selfishness."

-Betty Smartt Carter, author of Home Is Always the Place You Just Left

#### Pennsylvania)

### AWARD OF MERIT The New Parish

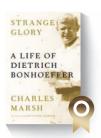
How Neighborhood Churches are Transforming Mission, Discipleship, and Community PAUL SPARKS, TIM SOERENS, AND DWIGHT J. FRIESEN

intervarsity press
"The authors explore
how the limitations
of staying rooted in
a particular place
actually provide
opportunities for
transformation and
mission. This is a
counterintuitive
notion for churches
that have bought
into the mobile and

#### transient values of our culture."

—David Swanson, pastor, New Community Covenant Church (Chicago)

#### HISTORY/ BIOGRAPHY



#### **Strange Glory**

#### A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer CHARLES MARSH

KNOPF

"Strange Glory is the best book in English on Bonhoeffer: honest about his failings (both personal and public) and forthright about his distance from modern readers. Still. Marsh's sensitive portrayal of a flawed saint doing great things for others in the name of Christ yields a rare combination of delight and moral urgency." -Douglas Sweeney,

—Douglas Sweeney, professor of church history, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

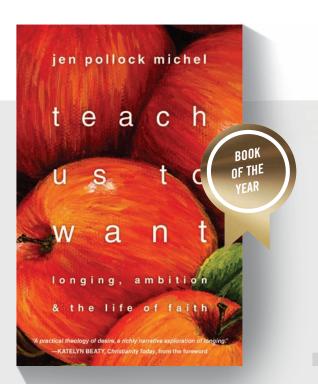
### AWARD OF MERIT

#### The Great and Holy War

How World War I Became a Religious Crusade PHILIP JENKINS

HARPERONE

"This sweeping, carefully researched book makes sense of a global conflict



## **CAN WE EVER** TRUST OUR **OWN HEARTS?**

An excerpt from the 2015 Book of the Year.

**S IT TRUE** that the hardest, least desirable choice is the most obviously holy? Is it true that personal desire must never be trusted? Many, like me, imagine desire and faith in a boxing ring, facing off like opponents. We don't suppose both can be cheered at the same time. We easily dismiss desire, arguing that the goal of the Christian life is obedience. Why promote desire? Doesn't that necessarily put us in the path of potential treachery? As my friend observed when I told her I was writing a book about a theology of

desire: "Theology of desire? But

isn't that an oxymoron?" Twenty years ago, as a newly

reformed 16-year-old who had just spent prom night playing house, I had reasons for mistrusting desire. But teen pregnancy wasn't my only reason. Didn't desire keep Christians from the radical sacri-

fice required for following Jesus? Weren't missionaries and their commitment to total relinquishment an example we all must follow? I surmised from my time as a college student in Africa that the harder and more undesirable life was, the more eternally worthwhile and valuable.

One doesn't have to be a converted reprobate to recognize the inherent tensions of desire. How do we ever know when desire isn't the apple of selfactualizing promise leading us far from God? Can it ever be possible to trust our own hearts?

We simply can't ignore desire. Like a heartbeat, desire pulses steadily in the backdrop of our lives. We may not always be aware of the work desire is doing, and yet it provides much of the necessary energy on which we rely. We get out of bed, go to work, get to the gym, marry (or not), have babies (or not), write books-follow Jesus-because in some measure, we want to.

Desire is primal: to be human is to want. As infants, when we're yet incapable of forming words, we're infinitely good at knowing what we want-and, for that matter, getting it. Wanting, as part of the human experience, is not to be rejected but embraced.

The gospel of Jesus Christ meets our holy hesitations about desire, without eliminating the tension or minimizing the dangers, yet suggesting it can be reformed. Though we can indeed want in ways that go tragically wrong, in the words of the apostle Paul, we are "buried with [Christ] by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Might not this newness of life include a newness of desire?

The renewal of our desires is indeed the bold promise of the new covenant: the law of God will be written on our hearts (see Jer. 31:33), and we will want God. What the Mosaic law was powerless to do-to change the human heart-the new covenant will achieve. It will finally grant us a real and obedient willingness to be God's people. As God promised the prophet Ezekiel, "I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them" (Ezek. 11:19).

Taken from Teach Us to Want by Jen Pollock Michel. © 2014 by Jen Pollock Michel. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downer's Grove, IL 60515, USA. www.ivpress.com

#### Teach Us to Want

Longing, Ambition, and the Life of Faith JEN POLLOCK MICHEL

INTERVARSITY PRESS



too often recalled as some intrigue about empires that we Yanks eventually barreled into and won Jenkins persuasively argues that the Great War is better understood as a holy war in which several crusading nations competed to advance their millennial goals. The ensuing collisionand its unfathomable destruction-redrew the global map and reshaped all the maior faiths involved." —Elesha Coffman, professor of church history. University of Dubuque Theological Seminary

#### AWARD OF MERIT

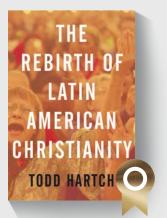
#### Called to Be Saints

#### An Invitation to **Christian Maturity** GORDON T. SMITH

IVP ACADEMIC

"Smith has written a comprehensive and compelling volume on the central importance of maturing in Christian life. He prophetically challenges anemic views of Christian conversion and living, ones that do not involve the imperative of growing into holiness." —Arthur Boers.

#### MISSIONS/GLOBAL AFFAIRS



China, Christianity, and the Question of Culture

—Judd Birdsall, fellow, Center on Faith & International Affairs

and contemporary role of the church in China."

#### The Rebirth of Latin **American Christianity**

TODD HARTCH

"Huilin puts theology, missiology, and church history in conversation with the social sciences to clear away many of the common mischaracterizations surrounding the historical

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

"This is essential background reading for understanding the history of the church in Latin America today—Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal. Hartch demonstrates a particular sensitivity to translation: how indigenous culture, theology, the gospel, and church life relate."

-Mark Gornik, director of City Seminary of New York, author of Word Made Global

#### Tyndale Seminary

# What's in a Phrase?

SPIRITUALITY

#### What's in a Phrase?

#### **Pausing Where Scripture Gives** You Pause MARILYN CHANDLER MCENTYRE

**EERDMANS** 

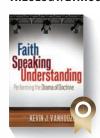
"McEntyre sings with words. Her insights are profound, even on the most mundane subjects. The beauty of her language, combined with the depth of her insights, is breathtaking (and I don't use that word often)."

—Christopher Hall, professor of theology, Eastern University

#### THEOLOGY/ETHICS

R. J. Bernardo Family Chair of

Leadership,



#### **Faith Speaking Understanding**

#### Performing the **Drama of Doctrine** KEVIN J. VANHOOZER

WESTMINSTER JOHN **KNOX PRESS** 

"Vanhoozer re-tools his creative theatrical model of theology and doctrine, making it accessible to pastors and churchgoers alike. In making the case that doctrine is for doing, he offers a reinvigorating vision of a church called onto the stage in order to display the dramatic glory of the triune

#### God before the watching world."

AWARD OF MERIT

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS

YANG HUILIN

-Derek Rishmawy, blogger, college and young-adult pastor, Trinity United Presbyterian Church (Santa Ana, California)

......

#### AWARD OF MERIT

#### The Crucified King

#### Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology JEREMY R. TREAT

**7NNDFRVAN** 

"The great, central doctrine of Christianity, the Atonement, has suffered rough treatment in this century from friend and foe alike. It has been pulled apart by false dichotomies, knocked off

balance by reactionary overemphasis, displaced, overworked, and buried out of sight. Treat's calm and sagacious book exorcises a legion of interpretive errors in one smooth argument: Christ brings the kingdom through the Cross."

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THOMAS NELSON

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-Megan Hill, Her.meneutics writer

A YEAR AFTER MARK DRISCOLL

THE NEW YORK TIMES LIST,

QUESTION A PRACTICE THAT

GOT CAUGHT MANIPULATING

AUTHORS AND PUBLISHERS

EXTENDS FAR BEYOND MARS HILL.

# FEW CHURCHES HAVE SPARKED AS MUCH COMMENTARY AND PROTEST AS MARS HILL CHURCH,

building up to a firestorm in October, when founding pastor Mark Driscoll resigned. But few of the Seattle church's actions have been so scrutinized as its decision to manipulate *The New York Times* bestseller list. Yet this is not an uncommon practice even among Christian authors.

On January 22, 2012, Mark and Grace Driscoll's *Real Marriage: The Truth about Sex, Friendship, and Life Together* (Thomas Nelson) was No. 1 under the "hardcover, advice, and misc." rankings. But the following week, it hadn't sold enough copies even to make the top 15. The reason: Mars Hill had paid Californiabased marketing firm ResultSource Inc. \$25,000 to orchestrate sales. Only individual book purchases count in the *Times* ranking. ResultSource made a bulk order (an order of 11,000 books for about

\$217,300) look like thousands of purchases from individual buyers across the country.

Former Mars Hill pastors told cr that some staff left the church after it decided to use ResultSource (though most who left did so for other reasons related to Driscoll's leadership). When the contract was made public in March 2014, some staff defended it as "marketing investments" designed to "tell lots of people about Jesus by every means

available." Days later, Driscoll said he would no longer refer to himself as a best-selling author, or to the book as a bestseller. "I now see [ResultSource's strategy] as manipulating a book sales reporting system, which is wrong," Driscoll wrote in a letter to the church.

Driscoll's ResultSource deal became part of the charges brought by former Mars Hill pastors and staff, although otherissues dominated. Meanwhile, many Christian publishing insiders wondered how far the revelations would go.

#### COMMON PRACTICE

"I suspect ResultSource isn't going to be effective any more, but they're simply doing what others have been doing," says Baker Publishing Group president Dwight Baker. "They are not the ones who invented the whole thing. They are just one of a number of agencies or services that do that kind of thing to move books through retail channels."

A year before the Driscoll flap, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* chronicled how such methods boost book sales and speaking careers in general markets. And on its own website, ResultSource once bragged about books its campaigns had elevated to the best-

seller lists, including David Jeremiah's Captured by Grace (Thomas Nelson), Robert A. Schuller's Walking in Your OwnShoes (FaithWords), and John Maxwell's The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership (Thomas Nelson). In 2000, a Thomas Nelson executive told The New York Times that thousands of orders for Amway cofounder Rich DeVos's Hope From My Heart were placed at a few small bookstores that report sales

ERIC METAXAS

"Anyone

thinking there

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it works."

to the Times list.

"This type of marketing is not one... we would choose to use again," said Suzanne Swift, spokeswoman for NewSpring Church, which hired ResultSource for a 2012 book by pastor Perry Noble. "Given that Perry was not going to make any money from the sales of *Unleash*, we believed virtually any [legal] marketing strategies would be appropriate and would avoid any potential conflicts of interest."

(NewSpring's full statement is at *ChristianityToday.com/go/resultsource.*)

But for an industry claiming to hold itself to a higher ethical standard, the attention given to the *Real Marriage* deal stirred considerable controversy. "There are authors, publishers, and organizations that have figured out how to manipulate the bestseller list, and it has become an industry

in itself," says Tessie DeVore, executive vice president of Charisma House Books. "But if we're going to single one person out, we also need to take a closer look at the entire industry."

#### NOTHING ILLEGAL ABOUT IT

Some see little difference between Result-Source's coordinated nationwide book orders and publishers' own efforts to make the bestseller list. Shouldn't marketers try to figure out the rules that help some books make the *Times* list?

Eric Metaxas, whose 2010 Bonhoeffer launched him into national prominence, doesn't fault Mars Hill staff for using ResultSource to get Real Marriage on the list. He says they did nothing wrong.

"Anyone thinking there is something pure about that list does not understand the system and how it works," he said. "I would even argue that trying to get on that list is a combination of a realistic sense of the market and good stewardship. When you understand... the *Times* list is a bit of a game... you realize being on that list has less to do with the actual merit of a book than with other, far less important factors."

Buying books through a lot of people instead of placing one big order because it's better for marketing isn't illegal, said Paul Santhouse, vice president of publishing at Moody Publishers. "Many of our authors employ strategic 'release' methods to enhance discoverability, like getting fans to buy from Amazon.com on the same day." On the other hand, he said, "Creativity is wonderful. But if I have a limited launch budget, I'd rather spend it on developing my readership base than on blipping the chart."

Publishers do want to hit the chart, though. "Street dates" for most Christian books unlikely to make the list can be flexible; publishers ship to bookstores and

# SEARCHING FOR STATUS

Authors say the thrill of making the bestseller list isn't about royalties.

In an increasingly crowded market where a flood of self-published titles compete for attention with traditionally published books, authors seek every advantage to stand out from the pack. So when Colleen Coble reached the *USA Today* bestseller list in 2013 with *Rosemary Cottage*, the exposure thrilled the veteran novelist.

"Major bestseller lists like this one and *The New York Times* list are widely recognized," says Coble, a mainstay on Christian bestseller lists. "They help authors like me expand awareness for books with readers who seek great fiction but may or may not specifically look for titles with an inspirational bent."

Although his debut book, *The God Questions*, sold more than 260,000 copies, Hal Seed never won the "best-seller" moniker. Yet he understands why others want the recognition.

"When I'm introduced as someone who has sold more than a quarter million books, I have higher perceived credibility with my audience, so that never hurts," the California pastor says.

However, if making the *Times* list has dramatically affected Eric Metaxas's career, the New York author says he hasn't noticed.

Metaxas understands how visibility serves as free marketing. It also provides Christian authors a level of mainstream respectability, he says, but it isn't clear that it does that much for a writer's career.

"When we consider whose books are typically on that list, we know it's not exactly a literary contest," Metaxas says. "If you have a TV show, you are virtually guaranteed a place on that list. If your book has a very cheap price point, you have an infinitely easier time of getting on the list. If you have an expletive in the title, you get triple points for 'edginess."

Besides, says well-known author William Paul Young, the essential questions of value, worth, and identity will never be answered by achieving bestseller status, no matter the list.

"If you want to find an identity through what you can do and you don't know who you are, then you're going to let somebody else tell you," says the author of *The Shack* and *Cross Roads*. "Culture has certain benchmarks by which they can identify you as successful, which are not [God's] benchmarks."

-KEN WALKER

other distribution points sometimes weeks before schedule simply because they're ready. For leading authors such as Max Lucado, the street date is much more firm: Retailers agree to wait to sell, and publishers work to combine advance orders with opening-week purchases to make the first-week number as large as possible.

"I don't think anybody would find that manipulative or irresponsible," Baker says. "As far as services that try to load up special sales, that's a cat-and-mouse game that's been going on for decades and will never be stopped completely."

#### MORE THAN MARKETING

Most industry insiders who spoke with cT said there's a difference between trying to get individuals to buy a book on a certain day, and paying a company to make bulk purchases look like individual purchases. The latter is dishonest, they said, and underscores a larger problem: celebrity, and the unruly influence it has in the Christian marketplace.

"If I can plop down \$25,000 and get a bestseller, that seems a little self-serving," said independent publicist Don Otis. "I hope

"Shouldn't we

authors stick

to both ethical

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writing."

**DON AYCOCK** 

I'm doing something that makes use of the gifts God has given me, but when you manipulate people, it crosses the line."

Lee Grady is the former editor of *Charisma* magazine who now spends much of his time working in developing countries. He sees the issue as emblematic of an evangelical subculture largely unaware of the rest of the world. "In Malawi, where people make \$2 a day, it is hard for them to get their brain around a church that buys books so its pastor can seem famous," he said. "In Nigeria, where everyone self-publishes books, there is no way that I know of to track sales on a national scale."

There is something ominous about Christian authors who manipulate the

system through questionable methods, says author Don Aycock. The Florida pastor cites Paul's admonition: "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible"—but not everything is constructive" (1 Cor. 10:23).

"Writers want to get their words into the hands of readers; I certainly do," Aycock said. "But shouldn't we authors stick to both ethical behavior and faith in the God we keep saying is in control? If we have to buy our way into readers' attention, maybe it's time to stop writing."

Of course, "buying your way into readers' attention" is another way of saying *marketing*. And conflating bulk sales to churches and conferences with individual book readers' purchases is as old as platform publishing.

"It's no different from the old days, when a guy had a 5,000-member church and we published him because he could sell at least 1,000 copies," says Tim Dudley, president of Arkansas-based New Leaf Publishing. "Everyone wanted to publish [James] Dobson because he had a radio platform. The platform has changed, but every publisher is looking for someone who has a platform that fits what we feel called to publish. That's just how you stay in business."

# RESULTSOURCE GOES QUIET

Business that artificially created bestsellers seems to be defunct.

ResultSource Inc. (RSI) may no longer exist. Its website is now a bare logo and "contact us" link. Founder Kevin Small isn't answering his phone and didn't return CT's calls or emails. Ministry and business leaders whom RSI once listed as clients and beneficiaries of its "Bestseller Campaigns" aren't eager to talk about the San Diego-based organization, either.

Before RSI downgraded its website, it boasted of making many business and leadership books bestsellers. The list included Ken Blanchard's *One Minute Entre-preneur*, Mark Sanborn's *The Fred Factor*, and John C. Maxwell's *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*.

That Maxwell used RSI isn't a coincidence. In 1996, Maxwell hired Small, a recent Liberty University graduate from Bellingham, Washington, and "tasked [him] with the creation of a platform that would be used to bring Maxwell's leadership books to market," according to his (now redacted) biographical sketch at MarriageMentoring .com. (The organization is one of at least two founded by Les and Leslie Parrott that lists Small as board chair.) The site once stated, "As the president of Maxwell's company, Kevin launched a satellite event training series that would enroll over 1 million students while rolling out an integrated publishing platform that launched 4 *New York Times* best-selling leadership titles. Maxwell's annual book sales grew to over 1.2 million books." For 21 Irrefutable Laws, RSI's website said it "managed every detail" of Maxwell's prelaunch book tour "and strategically orchestrated 'back of room sales,' which included incentive offers for case quantity purchases of books."

RSI'S campaigns for explicitly Christian books were not as public. Its website had listed Robert A. Schuller's *Walking in Your Own Shoes* and David Jeremiah's *Captured By Grace* among the titles it had turned into *New York Times* bestsellers, but deleted the references in 2009.

According to contracts and proposals obtained by cT (not just the Mars Hill contract now widely circulated), clients who wanted to make *The New York Times* list had to pay \$25,000 to \$30,000, as well as buy 11,000 to 12,000 copies of the book at near-retail rates. (Authors can generally buy their books from the publisher at significant discounts.) For hardcover advice or Christian books, that can easily reach \$200,000. (The contract with Mars Hill indicates the church paid \$217,300 for 11,000 copies of *Real Marriage*, which is about a 14 percent discount.) Authors content with making the bestseller lists of *The Wall Street Journal, USA Today*, Amazon.com, and Barnes & Noble paid \$5,000 less in fees and only had to purchase 6,000 copies of their book.

Other than NewSpring Church, ResultSource authors contacted by cT did not return phone calls and emails. Jeremiah referred calls to agent and lawyer Sealy Yates, whose office represents several other authors who used ResultSource (or represented them at the time their books became bestsellers): Maxwell, Driscoll, the Parrotts, and Sanborn. Yates called at Jeremiah's request after hours and left a message but did not return subsequent calls.

-TED OLSEN

Industry insiders say that as books' retail space has plummeted by two-thirds (because bookstores have closed), there is more pressure to find alternative marketing methods. Of the 21 evangelical houses ct contacted, 3 allow authors to oversee special marketing campaigns, while 5 either prohibit it or discourage it. Seven have no policy. Six others either refused to comment or did not respond to at least two requests for information. Those who don't have a stated policy say market buys are so far from the realm of possibility, they never considered addressing it in their corporate guidelines.

#### WHEN 'BESTSELLERS' DON'T SELL

Before ResultSource's tactics made headlines, Santhouse at Moody was reading Michael Korda's Making the List, a history of bestseller lists. The thinking behind companies like ResultSource is that people use bestseller lists to decide not just what to buy, but also what to talk about—and, if they're booksellers, what titles to display. But Santhouse believes that short-term bestsellers aren't worth the effort if the book doesn't stay on the list. So Moody is focusing on its backlist, betting that it's better to cultivate readership than to create short-term sizzle.

Dan Rich, chief publishing officer of David C. Cook, has been aware of the "Bestseller Campaign" strategy for years and discourages authors from using it. "I'd like to believe that a title that achieves *Times* best-selling status did so based on sales to customers who purchased through the regular bookstore or retailer channels where books are sold," he said. "To stay on the list every week—that is absolutely required."

That's becoming harder as bookstores lose their ability to capture customers' attention and as authors try to connect with wider audiences, says InterVarsity Press publisher Bob Fryling.

"The battle is even tougher in an age of almost necessary self-promotion and competition," Fryling says. "But as a publishing industry, we need to fight that battle together rather than either ignoring or avoiding it."

**KEN WALKER** is a freelance writer from Huntington, West Virginia. Additional reporting by Ted Olsen.

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BY ALISTER McGRATH

LETTERING BY JILL DE HAAN

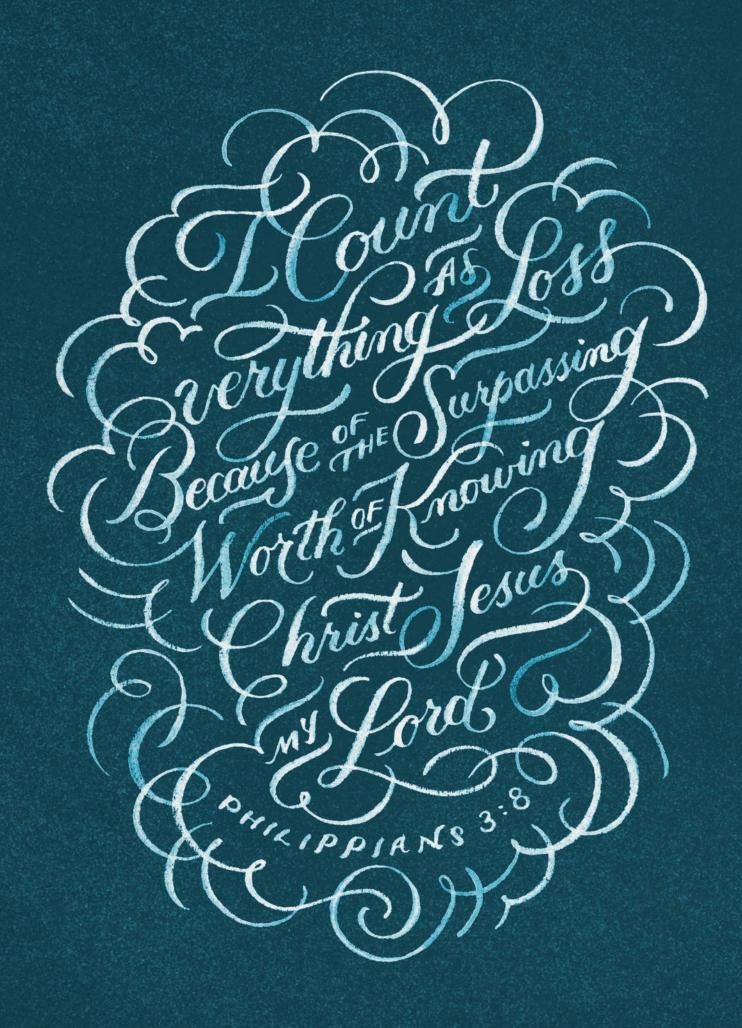
ALISTER McGRATH is Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion at Oxford University, president of the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics, and author most recently of C. S. Lewis—A Life. Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet (Tyndale).



# Understanding Seeking Faith

The day I realized knowing about Jesus was not enough.

THREE YEARS AGO, CT LAUNCHED THE GLOBAL GOSPEL PROJECT, A MULTIMEDIA INITIATIVE EXPLORING THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS OF CHRISTIANITY. IN THE MAGAZINE, WE FRAMED DOCTRINES IN TERMS OF HOW THEY ARISE FROM THINKING ABOUT THE THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY—YEAR ONE, DOCTRINES RELATED TO JESUS, YEAR TWO, THE FATHER, YEAR THREE, THE HOLY SPIRIT. THE PROJECT CONTINUES ONLINE, EXPLORING TEACHINGS THAT CONNECT TO THE LORD'S PRAYER AND TEN COMMANDMENTS. MEANWHILE, WE'VE UNDERTAKEN A NEW VENTURE IN PRINT: "RE-WORD." THIS WILL ALLOW US TO INCLUDE MORE BIBLICAL EXPOSITION IN OUR PAGES WITH ARTICLES THAT COMBINE PERSONAL NARRATIVE AND COMMENTARY FROM RESPECTED TEACHERS AND SCHOLARS. THE SERIES WILL NOT ONLY UNPACK THE RICHES OF SCRIPTURE, BUT ALSO SHOW HOW BIBLICAL TRUTH RENEWS OUR LIVES. —The Editors



#### On a beautiful May morning in 1973,

my Christian life took a decisive turn. I had converted to Christianity 18 months before, in the fall of 1971. I had been an aggressive atheist, utterly convinced of the godless worldview. Yet in my first term at Oxford University, I came to realize that Christianity was intellectually superior to my earlier atheism. Christianity simply made sense of life in a way that atheism did not.

Yet a year or so into my Christian life, all was not well. I tended to think of faith as a set of ideas only. Sure, I loved God with all my mind. But what about my heart? And my imagination? I sensed I was standing on the threshold of something enormously rich and satisfying, but I saw it only from a distance, uncertain of whether I could ever grasp it. Like Moses on Mount Nebo, I was glimpsing something that seemed beyond my reach. I knew I had to break free from the cold rationalism of my early faith. But how?

That was why I set out early on that day, cycling to Wytham Woods, a few miles from Oxford City Centre. I found a place to sit on a hillock from which I could see Oxford's famous "dreaming spires." Having asked God to help me sort myself out, I opened my Bible and began to read Paul's letter to the Philippians. One of my friends had told me how it had helped him in his faith to read the book in one sitting. I decided I would do the same out in the countryside, where there were no distractions.

That day I discovered two themes that have transformed my life as a Christian. Both came to me when I was reading Philippians 3, savoring every phrase, trying to identify and digest every nugget of wisdom.

#### WINGS OF FAITH

T

he first breakthrough cameas I contemplated Paul's declaration, "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus

my Lord" (v. 8, ESV used throughout). As I read and reread those words, I began to

realize the true nature of my problem: My faith had affected my mind but left the rest of me untouched. Up to that point, I had thought of spiritual growth in terms of accumulating knowledge. And so I had read biblical commentaries and books on systematic theology. But that hadn't deepened the quality of my faith. I was like someone who had read books about France but had never visited. Or someone who had read about falling in love but had never experienced it.

Everything in the opening section contributed to my transformed vision of the Christian faith. Yet that single verse seemed to sum up everything so well.

Its context is significant. Paul explains how his personal journey qualified him as a distinguished Jew: "If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more" (v. 4). Paul was not being ironic. He was listing his many achievements before delivering the point: These achievements pale in comparison to the wonder, joy, and privilege of knowing Christ. "Whatever gain I had," he said, "I counted as loss for the sake of Christ" (v. 7). In the light of Christ, we see things as they really are. What we thought was gold crumbles to dust.

Paul explained that his achievements might actually get in the way of what really matters: knowing Christ. Good things can be a barrier to what is best. I don't think the word *transvaluation* was in my vocabulary at that time, but that was what Paul was proposing—a radical revision of my understanding of what mattered in life.

Paul's words forced me to reconsider my value system. He made it clear that what mattered was not what I achieved, but what Christ achieved within and through me. Our status is given through faith in Christ, not obtained through the works of the law. Paul knew that knowing Christ overshadowed and overwhelmed anything and everything he had previously known and valued.

Could I say that? Did knowing Christ trump everything else I loved and valued? Orwas Jesus just one interest among many?

What spoke most powerfully to me that morning was Paul's distinction between knowing about Jesus Christ and knowing Jesus Christ. Many readers, no doubt, will feel this is blindingly obvious. But everyone has to discover it sometime, and that day I grasped the importance of "spirituality" for nourishing my relationship with God. And the great "Christ hymn" (Phil. 2:5-11) helped me see my need to focus on Jesus' life and death, and not approach him through a depersonalizing framework of abstract ideas. As a result, hymns like Isaac Watts's "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"-which I had seen as sentimental emotionalism-took on new meaning as I was able to share and enter into the experience of adoring Christ.

Paul's words "I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (3:12) gave me a framework for growing in my faith. The idea linked together my own responsibility to try to do my best, however limited, and God graciously supplementing my weaknesses and inadequacies. It was because Christ had taken hold of me that I was enabled and encouraged to take hold of him and let him lead me onward and upward through life. Previously, I had tended to see my faith as something I needed to sustain; now I realized it could sustain me.

I began to think of my faith as being grasped and held by Christ, and adjusted every aspect of my life accordingly—my mind, heart, imagination, and hands. I made a connection—perhaps a naive one, but one that spoke deeply to me—with the powerful image of Christ knocking on the door of the church at Laodicea, asking to be welcomed (Rev. 3:20). When I became a Christian, I had invited Christ into my mind, but that was where it had stopped. I realized that I had to allow every "room" of my life to be filled with the life-giving and life-changing presence of Christ.

Of course, I never lost sight of rationally defending the faith. As an atheist who had discovered Christianity, I naturally saw myself as an apologist—someone who was willing and able to rise to

the challenges to faith presented by the culture. Yet I progressed in my understanding of what it meant to have faith in Christ. I began to read C. S. Lewis in 1974, and found in him someone who reaffirmed the rationality of faith while showing its rich imaginative dimensions. I also began to read Thomas à Kempis's classic *Imitation of Christ*, embracing its challenge to model my life around the crucified Christ. I had previously seen the sermon as the heart of a church service; I

was unaware of the vitality of Christian community. I had not read Cyprian of Carthage's famous maxim: "He can no longer have God for his Father who has not the church for his mother." If I had, it would have baffled me. The church, in my view, played merely an educational and social role.

So I was struck by Paul's words in Philippians 3:20: "our citizenship is in heaven." When I had attended a lecture at Oxford on the Roman colonial system, in which a "spirit of grace" (Zech. 12:10) dwells. Just as the Romans at Philippi spoke the language and kept the laws of Rome, so we observe the customs and values of heaven. As Christians, we live in two worlds and must learn to navigate both while ultimately being faithful to our homeland.

This helped me to finally make sense of Christian community. I began to see the church as a place that helps Christians straddle the two worlds of faith—where we are now and where we shall finally be. It's like an oasis in a desert, equipping us to work and serve in the world while fostering and safeguarding our distinctiveness as Christians.

I began to realize that the church was an imperfect yet important anticipation of heaven, whose worship and ethos were integral to my faith. The church was a community gathered around the public reading of God's Word, its interpretation and application through preaching, and its enactment in worship and prayer.

Many readers will rightly note that this-my early thoughts, I remind youfails to do justice to the full nature of the church. But that's not the point. As I grew in faith, I read works such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Life Together, which helped me develop a richer and fuller vision of Christian community. But reading Philippians triggered a series of thoughts that helped me solve a serious problem I was facing. However imperfect and inadequate those thoughts of May 1973 may have been, they set me on the road to ordination in the Church of England, so that I might minister within the kind of community I had once considered irrelevant. Although my primary responsibility is teaching at the University of Oxford, I take great pleasure in ministering to village congregations in the Cotswolds, near my home.

Perhaps the most important lesson from my early morning reflections 40-some years ago was how the Bible can speak to us in times of need, transition, and discernment. I was at a crossroads. Like so many others before me, I found that coming to the Bible with real, honest questions—and a willingness to be changed—opened up new possibilities of growth. I know I won't be the last to make that discovery.

### I began to see the church as a community that helps Christians straddle the two worlds of faith where we are now and where we shall finally be.

began to realize how worship nourished and enriched my faith. No longer did I have to actively work at my faith. It was as if it developed a life and strength of its own, supporting me. The phrase "wings of faith" suddenly became meaningful.

#### WHY THE CHURCH?

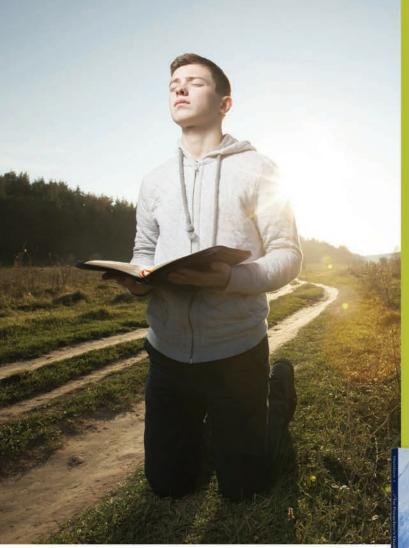


et my reading of Philippians helped me answer another question that had troubled me: What is the point of church? The Oxford congregations I

had attended provided rather meager fare—sermons that focused on encouraging us to read our Bibles and trust God. As a result, I thought I could get more from reading books or talking to friends than from attending church. I I had failed to connect it to this passage, which uses the Greek term *politeuma*, translated here as "citizenship." A jumble of thoughts surged through my mind as I began to connect the dots.

The church is an outpost of heaven on earth, what Romans termed a colonia—not to be confused with the English word colony. Philippi was itself a Roman colonia at the time, an outpost of Rome in the distant province of Macedonia. Paul's readers would have easily related to this imagery. Roman citizens residing in Philippi had the right to return home to the metropolis after serving in the colony. For Paul, one benefit of knowing Christ was being a citizen of heaven. Christians live on earth now. where there is much to accomplish for God's kingdom. But we are citizens of heaven, and that's our real home.

The church is a community of believers, an outpost of heaven on earth, a place



## Return to the Word

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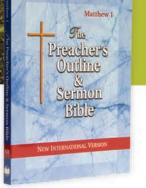
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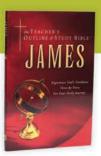
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his past summer, my husband and I wanted to teach one of our youngest sons, age 6, to ride his bike. His twin brother, Colin, had already mastered the skill and was nearly keeping up with his older brother. But despite our cajoling—"It's fun to ride a bike!"—Andrew could not see the merit of potentially skinning his knees, and our attempts ended in vain tears. (You can guess whose.)

Then suddenly, in early August our little boy outgrew his fears. Nearly instantaneously, the mechanics of balancing, steering, and simultaneously pedaling became almost easy. The fears and tears dissolved, and Andrew forgot that riding a bike had ever been hard.

When it comes to prayer, most of us feel clumsy. We don't recall someone running alongside us, shouting instructions as we learned. Instead, most of us found our balance by a hodge-podge of imitation and experimentation. Once we've learned to ride a bike, we can be sure we're doing it right. Can anything remotely similar be said about prayer?

In his new book, Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God (Dutton Adult) \*\*\*\*\*, Timothy Keller, founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, invites readers to systematically learn to pray. Although he claims there are both right and wrong ways to pray, Keller admits that he, like us, has struggled with prayer. In fact, it wasn't until midlife—after the catastrophic events of 9/11 and family health crises—that he found his bearings.

"I was barely scratching the surface of what the Bible commanded and promised regarding prayer," Keller said. So he began to make changes to his prayer habits. He added to his established devotional regimen evening prayer as well as the practice of meditation. He imitated the holy boldness of the Psalms, praying with greater expectation. Finally, he dedicated himself to studying prayer and the writings of long-dead theologians (Augustine, Martin Luther, John Owen, and John Calvin, to name a few). In *Prayer*, Keller offers a comprehensive account of what

he has learned about the theology, devotion, and practice of prayer. It should prove to be a helpful resource for generations to come.

#### **ABIDING THE TENSIONS**

Prayer is theologically lucid and nuanced, as those familiar with Keller will expect. Some will reject his apprehension about medieval mysticism, and others will lament his neglect of the more supernatural elements of prayer, in terms of both miraculous experience and effect. Nevertheless, it's clear that Keller has deftly addressed what seem to be the inherent contradictions of prayer. In keeping with his customary approach to theological matters, he repudiates the simplicity of either/or answers, favoring instead the mystery of both/and propositions.

As one example, Keller explains that prayer is a means for knowing both God and ourselves. Though effective praying requires immersion in the Scriptures ("We know how we should be praying only by getting our vocabulary from the Bible"), prayer is also "the only entry way into genuine self-knowledge." Keller doesn't indulge navel-gazing in prayer, but he does insist that communing with God reveals much about us.

As another example, Keller asserts that prayer depends on both grace and effort. "There is every indication in the Bible," he writes, "that we should be striving to pray rightly." We must learn about God from the Scriptures and tether ourselves to that revelation as we pray, for apart from immersion in God's words, "we may be responding not to the real God but to what we wish God and life to be like."

While we should try to pray "rightly," Keller gently reminds us, there are no perfect prayers or perfect pray-ers. "All prayer is impure," he says, corrupted by our ignorance and willful sin. We should try and yet can fail at prayer—an encouraging piece of news, when we remember

Most of us feel clumsy at praying. We don't recall someone running alongside, shouting instructions as we learned. that grace is there to sustain us.

As a final example, Keller urges us to pray with both boldness and surrender. Desire, he writes, should take its rightful place in prayer. This is certainly the model we have in Scripture, and desire often guides us in understanding our obligations to God. But even as we submit our petitions, we must accept the wisdom of God's will. "In short, God will either give us what we ask or give us what we would have asked if we knew everything he knew." In Keller's vision of prayer, we have every right to ask audaciously—and every reason to trust.

Throughout the book, Keller abides the tensions of prayer. He allows for both God's sovereignty and our participation, asking us to engage both mind and heart. Maintaining these kinds of paradoxes will infuriate readers looking for mechanical formulas, but it will liberate those willing to participate in mysteries they do not understand.

#### **WANTING TO PRAY**

Perhaps a book on prayer is best judged by the extent to which it animates our desire to pray. Keller's book is not overly anecdotal, and more could have been shared about his experience with prayer as a husband, father, and pastor. Nevertheless, as the chapters move from theology to practice, he coaxes readers toward the dependence and intimacy of prayer. Only as we pray, writes Keller, do we "experience a powerful confidence that God is handling our lives well, that our bad things will turn out for good, our good things cannot be taken from us, and the best things are yet to come." As those promises seem nearly irresistible, readers will find themselves wanting to pray-and having a better grasp of how.

Keller also forces us to count the cost of our prayerlessness. "A minister may fill his pews," Keller writes, quoting Puritan theologian Owen, "but what that minister is on his knees in secret before God Almighty, that he is and no more." Prayer, like no other spiritual discipline, reveals the extent to which we trust and revere God. It's far more than mere rudeness to fail to "address your Maker, Sustainer, Redeemer, to whom you owe your every breath," Keller soberly reminds every toobusy-to-pray reader.

In the book's annotated bibliography, Keller shares a helpful list of recommended resources, one of which is Calvin's *Institutes* (Book 3, Chapter 20). "Calvin," he writes, "is both theological and practical, and as usual very comprehensive. This is a rarity—deep theology with a spiritually elevated tone and savor that makes the reader *want* to pray."

One could very well praise *Prayer* in much the same way. Keller's robust

theological understanding helps readers find their balance in prayer; his practical, devotional wisdom gives them confidence to pedal. But even more, his words inspire the desire to take to the road—despite all the hard work that entails.

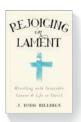
As Keller concedes, "[Sometimes] you won't feel that you're making any progress at all, [and fellowship with God] may

be fitful and episodic." But when your prayers are lifted toward a God of grace, at just the unexpected moment, you find that you know how to pedal, and that you are headed toward home.

**JEN POLLOCK MICHEL** is the author of *Teach Us to Want: Longing, Ambition and the Life of Faith* (InterVarsity Press).

# In Cancer's Company

Rejoicing in Lament: Wrestling with Incurable Cancer and Life in Christ J. Todd Billings (Brazos Press)



A theologian reflects on life after a medical death sentence. By John Koessler

ew words have the power to chill the soul as does *cancer*. Combined with *terminal*, the effect is both exponential and surreal.

It is trite to say that a cancer diagnosis will change your life. Hearing these words from a doctor is profoundly disorienting, more like an out-of-body experience than a medical judgment. Once the sentence is pronounced over us, like some strange and terrifying sacrament uttered by a priest, we are never the same.

At age 39, theologian J. Todd Billings was diagnosed with a rare form of blood cancer. In his remarkable book Rejoicing in Lament: Wrestling with Incurable Cancer and Life in Christ (Brazos Press) ★★★★★, he presents an unflinching look at how life changes after a medical death sentence. In the same tradition as C. S. Lewis's A Grief Observed and Joan Didion's The Year of Magical Thinking, Rejoicing in Lament is brave, honest, and probing. But this book has one important difference. Most writers in this genre look at death and dying through the eyes of a family member who survives. Billings surveys the same terrain, but through the lens of someone who is dying, someone whose landscape includes both "a narrowed future" and "a spacious place." It is territory marked by fog and light, sorrow and joy. Billings wrote the book during various stages of his treatment, and its contours reflect the shape of a journey that isn't over.

At the outset, Billings and his wife

decided to be candid with those who asked about their experience. "There are risks with that kind of sharing, as cancer patients know," Billings observes. "Our culture often suggests that we are 'entitled' to a long, fulfilling life, and if that doesn't happen, there must be someone to sue, someone to blame." Because Billings is both a theologian and an ordained minister, he looked to the Bible for markers to aid his journey through this strange land. The Book of Job helped him find his place in God's story. The Psalms of lament provided the soundtrack for the journey. This stark combination provides a much needed dose of sobriety and depth, as anyone reeling from a cancer diagnosis will tend to be suspicious of the spiritual platitudes offered up by well-meaning believers as well as the victory dances of cancer survivors.

Billings is refreshing when he grapples with the cosmic questions that accompany suffering. "I recall how I did my best to search for a 'cause' for my multiple myeloma cancer shortly after my diagnosis," he writes. "Intuitively, it was a pressing question. What did I do to 'deserve' this?" Billings rightly concludes that God's response is often silence. "Our theodicy question—which demands to know the causal reason for 'why'—is left unanswered."

This does not mean that Billings strikes a note of uncertainty. He is a *practicing* Christian, in the best sense

of the word. In his effort to understand the theological issues related to illness and death, Billings turned to the foundational texts of his faith, combining them with the elemental disciplines of the Christian life. He read the Scriptures, prayed the Psalms (particularly those of lament), and reflected on the first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism: "What is your only comfort in life and death? That I am not my own, but that I belong—in body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ."

Rejoicing in Lament is both a comfort and a guide for all who labor along the same path as Billings does. It also provides insight to family members and friends of those suffering from cancer or other serious illnesses. Others will benefit from engagement with spiritual and theological reflection in the venerable tradition of ars moriendi (the art of dying). They will discover that we are all traveling in company with Billingsnot as prisoners trudging through life under a grim sentence of death, but as pilgrims making our way to the house of God in the undiscovered country, singing Psalms of ascent. CT

JOHN KOESSLER is chair of the pastoral studies department at Moody Bible Institute. He is the author of *The Surprising Grace of Disappointment: Finding Hope When God Seems to Fail Us* (Moody Publishers).



#### **MY TOP FIVE Amy Julia Becker**



uch of Amy Julia Becker's writing, on her blog and in her books, revolves around being a mother of three young children, including Penny, a daughter with Down syndrome. Becker's latest release, Small Talk: Learning From My Children About What Matters Most (Zondervan), compiles vignettes on revealing and poignant conversations with her kids about birth, death, resurrection, and everything in between. Here, Becker names 5 books that every mother should read.



#### The Quotidian Mysteries By Kathleen Norris

Although Norris does not have children of her own, her short book on domestic duties teaches me something new every time I read it. Norris doesn't overlook the tedium of housework (and, by extension, some aspects of childrearing), but she imbues chores and duties with value and purpose. Norris connects the repetitive nature of our lives to the significance of our daily walk with God. When I read her words, they remind me of God's grace in our everyday lives.



#### A Praying Life By Paul E. Miller

As the father of six kids, ministry leader Miller understands the reality of prayer in the midst of family life. His conversational style and willingness to share personal stories helps mothers understand even the most mundane day as part of God's good work in the world. Miller offers a practical way to pray using prayer cards. I created cards during years of sporadic prayer, and they remain testimonies of God's faithfulness to our family.



#### **Bread and Jam for Frances** By Russell Hoban

Children love Frances, the prototypical self-consumed, whimsical, and exasperating child who is embodied in the classic series as a young badger. This and other Frances books encourage parents to hang in there with kids who, say, want to eat bread and jam with every meal and have no interest in spaghetti and meatballs. With made-up songs, misspelled words, and wry humor, Hoban's series—penned 50 years ago—is a treat for parent and child alike.



#### **Lila** By Marilynne Robinson

Robinson was nominated for the National Book Award for *Lila*, her third novel in a trilogy that began with the critically acclaimed *Gilead* and *Home*. Each book takes place in the fictional Iowa town of Gilead, from the perspective of a different character. *Lila* may be my favorite, as it combines reflections about God as the Good Parent with the story of a young woman who becomes a mother. In prose beautiful and haunting, *Lila* glimmers with hope without ever becoming sentimental.



#### The Trumpet of the Swan By E. B. White

A lesser-known classic by the author of *Charlotte's Web*, this children's story offers a subtle commentary on good parenting. White weaves together the world of Sam, an adolescent boy, and Louis, an adolescent swan, as they grow up. Louis develops perseverance, tenacity, and generosity as a result of being different. His parents provide great support while secretly worrying that he will never fit in, make friends, or get married. Louis proves them wrong, giving every anxious, loving mother a reason for hope.



From Here to
Maturity:
Overcoming the
Juvenilization
of American
Christianity
Thomas E. Bergler
(Eerdmans)



### It's Time to Grow Up

Thomas E. Bergler wants to steer churches toward the path of maturity.

Interview by Drew Dyck

n 2012, Thomas E. Bergler made a splash with his book (and much-discussed CT cover story) The Juvenilization of American Christianity, arguing that wellintentioned efforts to reach young people had contributed to a crisis of spiritual immaturity. Now, in From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity (Eerdmans), he describes a new youth ministry approach that can reinvigorate the church—a topic also addressed in this issue's cover story. Leadership Journal managing editor Drew Dyck spoke with Bergler, professor of ministry and missions at Huntington University, about guiding the entire church-from the youngest to the oldest members-into the fullness of Christ.

#### It's true that youth ministries are often light on substance. But don't they do a great job of reaching kids?

Many people drawn to youth ministry have a passion for youth evangelism, which is wonderful. But I would like to see an equal passion and creativity for discipleship.

Just talking about evangelism and valuing it has resulted in effective outreach. The same is true with discipleship. The more we talk about it, think about it, and raise it up as good, the more we start doing it.

For years church leaders have scrutinized everything related to outreach, asking, "Is this contributing to or hindering evangelism? How will a newcomer perceive this?" We also need to ask, "If they keep coming back, what's going to happen? How will they be transformed?"

### You write that many Christians don't desire spiritual maturity. How can we attain what we don't even want?

We tend to think that *maturity* means *perfection*. But the New Testament clearly teaches that spiritual maturity is different

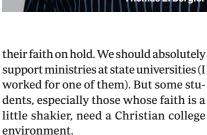
from heavenly perfection. Spiritual maturity is presented (in passages like Heb. 5, Eph. 4, and 1 Cor. 3) as foundational in the Christian life. But our popular theology says things like, "We're all just sinners saved by grace." True enough, but that can start to sound like what Dallas Willard called "miserable sinner Christianity": that no progress can be expected in this life.

Or consider the slogan, "The only difference between Christians and non-Christians is that Christians are forgiven." Well, that's simply not biblical. What is the new birth if not something *new*? We are always tempted to think we can earn salvation, or that God can't forgive me again. So we need to emphasize salvation by grace, but not at the expense of pursuing maturity. That's why I love Philippians 3. Paul says we must cling to the free gift of salvation, but goes on to claim that this gift frees and motivates him to run hard after Christ.

#### How can we foster maturity specifically among young people?

Intergenerational relationships are crucial, as is involving young people in the life of the church. I'd also ask which church programs or activities are truly making disciples. A youth ministry I've sent many interns to undertook this kind of evaluation recently. The leaders realized one of the trips that was extremely popular was not helping their young people grow in faith. So they canceled it. That didn't mean getting rid of everything fun, but this particular trip was not furthering their goals.

We also have to pay attention to the years after high school. More parents and high-school students should strongly consider a Christian college. Today's culture is almost perfectly designed to disengage emerging adults from church and to put



#### How can we foster maturity across all age groups?

We need to look at our environments. Sunday morning worship is one. Would someone who went to your church every Sunday learn about spiritual maturity? Why it's an important part of the Christian life? What about small groups, mission trips, service projects, and even committees?

There's a growing body of evidence suggesting that adults mature through having intergenerational interactions within a church. Parents and youth leaders are well aware that young people need adults. But it's equally true that adults need younger people. We need them to draw forth from us the gifts and energies that help us grow as members of the church.



## MoMA's Fragile Prayers

Plaster sinks and other strange artifacts are altars to an unknown god. By Daniel A. Siedell

n the fall of 1989, I was standing in front of one of Jackson Pollock's huge paint-splattered canvases at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) with my girlfriend, now my wife. She asked, "What makes this art?"

Her question echoed my own. The art history and philosophy I had become so comfortable with in graduate seminars suddenly struck me as disturbingly insufficient. It was more than a question about art. It was a theological question, asked by one Christian of another, in front of one of the many strange and ambiguous artifacts that seem to contradict what Christians have traditionally

valued in the visual arts.

Christianity, or at least the church, once provided both the context and content for art. But what to make of paint dripped onto a canvas (Pollock), a urinal displayed upside down (Marcel Duchamp), silk-screened images of Campbell's Soup cans (Andy Warhol), a stuffed shark (Damien Hirst)—not to mention Andres Serrano's infamous crucifix suspended in golden liquid, titled *Piss Christ*?

I recalled my wife's question a few months ago while visiting the MoMA, this time standing in front of a plaster sink made by Robert Gober. What would I say to my students from The King's College when I brought them to this exhibition a few days later? How could I help them experience this plaster sink as Christians?

I knew my students were tempted to retreat into abstractions like the Good, the True, and the Beautiful when we talked about art. But even apart from the temptation to turn artworks into illustrations of philosophical abstractions, why go all the way to MoMA—or any contemporary gallery? Much easier to use television shows and movies, easily accessible and far more popular. What could we learn, if anything, from these strange artifacts?

My career as a scholar, educator, and curator of modern and contemporary art

### Modern art addresses the viewer as a vulnerable wanderer, a son or daughter of Cain who fears both God and neighbor.

has been animated by the belief that "all things" are made in and through Christ, as the apostle Paul says in Colossians. Is it possible that "all things" includes not only Renaissance altarpieces but also plaster sinks?

#### **COME CLOSER**

During his 40-year career, Gober has made replicas of the familiar objects that clutter our daily lives—and by installing them in particular contexts, he makes them unfamiliar. He has installed bags of cat litter, a package of diapers, a lawn chair, and a baby crib, as well as eerily accurate replicas of legs and torsos. But the sinks brought the artist to the attention of dealers, critics, and curators in the mid-1980s, and remain his most evocative works.

Made from plaster, plywood, steel, wire lath, aluminum, watercolor, and semigloss enamel paint, these sinks of various sizes lack faucets and drains. They cannot perform the most basic function of sinks, moving water. "What do you do when you stand in front of a sink?" Gober once said. "You clean yourself. I seemed to be obsessed with making objects that embodied that broken promise."

Gober's creative journey to the sinks began when he was supporting his early artistic career through carpentry, welding, and casting—skills he had learned in sculpture classes. Growing tired of working for other people, he decided to make things he could sell. "And immediately, without belaboring it, dollhouses popped into my head." As he built them, "it was really becoming clear to me that these weren't dollhouses—what I was interested in was the symbol of the house."

The house was a potent symbol for

Gober. His father built the family home in Yalesville, Connecticut. "This is what I learned a man does," Gober has said—"build houses." But Gober's realization of his homosexuality caused a rift with his parents, as well as with his Catholic faith. Mocked by classmates as "Gober girl," he recalls that "my dad didn't like me."

Does the sink his conflicted father installed in the basement of that house, the sink whose beauty enchanted Gober as a child, explain Gober's own sink? Are Gober's childhood pain, sexual identity, and subsequent gay activism what this work is "about"? It's important that we not stop there. Gober's wager, the wager of so much of modern art, is that such intensely personal subjects can connect to viewers' own experiences of pain and vulnerability.

The sink isn't merely a form of therapy or self-indulgence. It addresses us and provokes our own recollection of broken promises, wounds, joy and pain, the childhood fears and enchantments that have become an inextricable part of us, whether we recognize it or not.

Like so many works in the modern artistic tradition, Gober's sink asks us to recognize our brokenness. Too often Christian approaches to art and culture tend to deny this frailty, the experience of fragmentation and loss. The classical artist entered the studio to serve the public, fulfilling a commission from the church or the state. But the modern artist enters the studio to deal with his own self and hopes that this struggle, which can never be separated from a struggle with God and the world, can address the struggle of those outside the studio. If classical art addresses the viewer as a member of a vibrant and powerful religious or political community, modern art addresses the viewer as a vulnerable wanderer, a son or daughter of Cain who fears both God and neighbor.

"We have to be told who we are," the Lutheran theologian Oswald Bayer wrote. The best works of modern art can remind us that we are sons and daughters of Cain. The work of our hands is weak, vulnerable, and fragile, whether we acknowledge it or not. It is effective, if it is effective at all, only as the result of God's grace.

#### **LOOK LONGER**

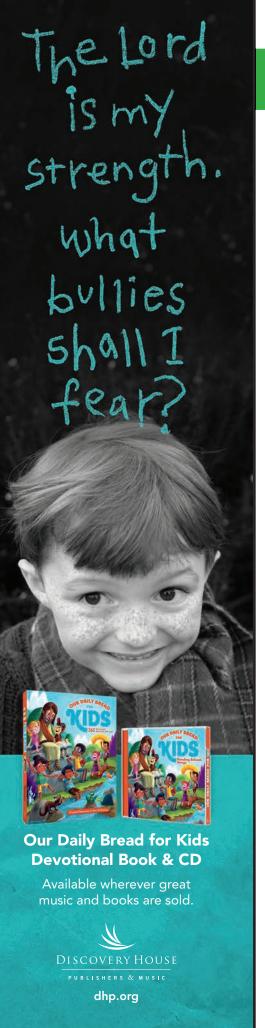
Christians can recognize even the most seemingly profane of contemporary art as a kind of prayer, a venture on the possibility that someone, and Someone, will visit, observe, and respond with grace. But to hear this prayer, Christians need to recognize their own vulnerability and fragility rather than expecting art to affirm our piety and power.

Even Paul seemed to have taken time to visit the artistic works of Athens, observing there a monument dedicated to an unknown god. Far from denigrating the Greeks for their blindness, he commended them for their search, offering to name the God they sought. The landscape of modern and contemporary art is littered with altars to unknown gods. These paintings, sculptures, and installations create an opportunity for Christians to creatively and lovingly name the one in whom all things are made—for "he is not far from any one of us" (Acts 17:27).

When asked about the meaning of Gober's work, the artist Charles Ray said, "It asks me to be near. To come closer and look longer or to come back tomorrow and look again. The work whispers, 'Be with me.'"

At the heart of Christian faith is the belief that the world's Maker has heard that prayer—has come close to his own estranged creation. So a few days later, students in tow, I came back to look at that sink, to remember that paint-splattered canvas I stood before in 1989, letting these works whisper to us. With them, I wanted to make sure that if Christ were speaking to us in these galleries—asking us to come closer, to look again, to be with him—we would have ears to hear.

**DANIEL A. SIEDELL** is the art historian in residence at The King's College in New York.



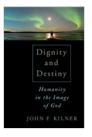


# New & Noteworthy

Compiled by Matt Reynolds

"Humanity's status in God's image has served historically as a compelling impetus toward liberation.... Misunderstandings of God's image have had precisely the opposite effect."

~ from **Dignity and Destiny** by John F. Kilner



### DIGNITY AND DESTINY

#### Humanity in the Image of God

JOHN F. KILNER (EERDMANS)

The belief that humans are created in God's image has helped to animate movements to vanquish cruelty, injustice, and discrimination worldwide. But Kilner, director of bioethics programs at Trinity International University, reminds us of the danger when counterfeit versions of this belief emphasize traits—like the capacity for reason or self-governmentthat vary from person to person. "Viewing people in terms of the image of God has fostered magnificent efforts to protect and redeem people," he writes. "It has also encouraged oppressing and even destroying people." Kilner lays out the Bible's teaching on what it means to be God's image bearers, in order to combat the real-world harms that result when we don't understand it.



#### THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION

Writers on Religion, Adoption, Faith, and More Edited by Melanie Springer Mock, Martha Kalnin Diede. And Jeremiah Webster (Cascade Books)

Christians sometimes fall prey to a "happilyever-after mythology" surrounding adoption, writes Mock, an English teacher at George Fox University, in the introduction to this volume. In reality, adoption is a "messy business, fraught with paradox and complication, with joy and sorrow, with loss and redemption." The Spirit of Adoption gathers first-person accounts from adoptive parents, birth mothers, and adoptees on how adoption has shaped their lives. "By allowing others to narrate their spiritual journeys through adoption," Mock writes, the book shows that "adoption can be a wonderful, powerful, hopeful experience and one that is difficult, painful, despairing. And that . . . these paradoxes might be held together in God's hand."



### HIDDEN BUT NOW REVEALED

#### A Biblical Theology of Mystery

G. K. BEALE AND BENJAMIN L. GLADD (IVP ACADEMIC)

The word mystery appears nine times in the Old Testament and about three times as often in the New. But modern readers have trouble understanding it, because it carries distinct theological meanings that aren't present in today's "mystery" books and films. Beale and Gladd, both New Testament scholars, analyze each use of mystery in Scripture, illustrating how God has gradually disclosed and fulfilled his promises. This kind of case-by-case study, the authors say, "ought to sharpen our understanding" of topics like the kingdom of God, the Crucifixion, the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, and the connection between the Old and New Testaments.

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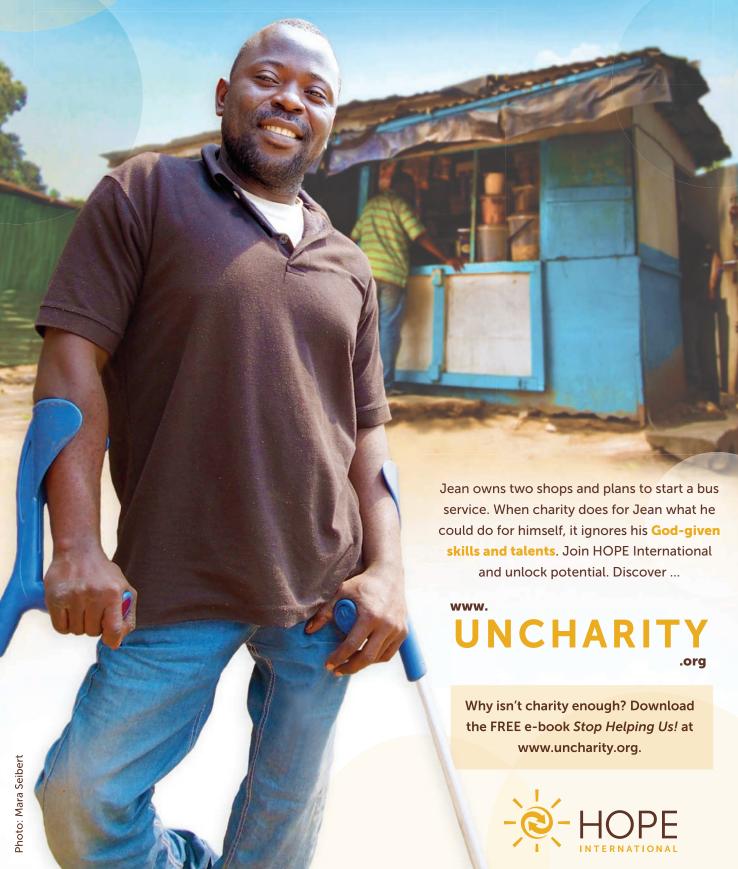


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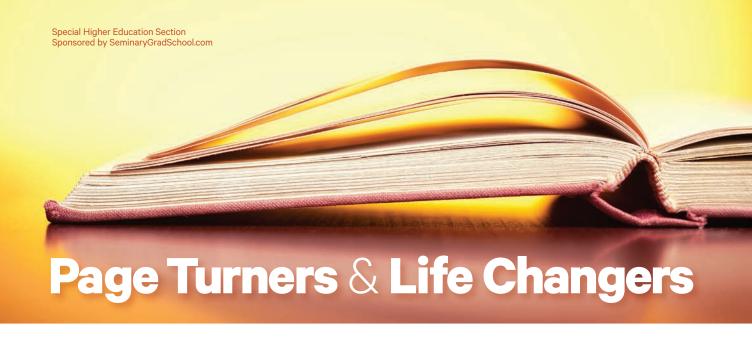
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# Charity overlooks Jean's potential. Uncharity unlocks it.







### 18 ministry leaders share the books that have shaped their lives and work.

#### Compiled by Samuel Ogles

he influence of theological texts and authors can be traced through time. Augustine's work has greatly influenced Western theologians for centuries. Medieval theologian Peter Lombard's Four Books of Sentences was so universally used and influential that it was liberally quoted not only by Aquinas and Bonaventure, but also by Reformers like Calvin and Luther. The Reformers' texts helped shape the figures of 19th century Christianity in America, such as Charles Spurgeon and Dwight L. Moody who, in turn, were read by ministry leaders of the 20th century.

Today the same pattern of influential books shaping the next generation continues. Here 18 ministry leaders answer the question, Apart from the Bible, which book has influenced your ministry most? (Spoiler alert: three of them chose Mere Christianity. Read on to see what else made the list.)

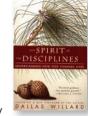


#### John Ortberg

Author, speaker, and senior pastor of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in Menlo Park, California.

#### The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives by Dallas Willard

I first heard about it when I attended a conference at Willow Creek 25 years ago. Through that book, wonderful windows were opened to me about how spiritual growth actually



takes place. I discovered wisdom about the nature of transformation that has been around for centuries but of which I had been unaware. It's been enormously helpful to me personally, and I try to have it inform my ministry as a lifelong goal.



#### Suzii Paynter

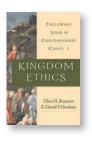
Executive coordinator of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and an advocate for issues such as human trafficking, religious liberty,

and immigration reform.

#### Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context

by Glen Stassen & David Gushee

This book is one I return to again and again. Stassen and Gushee have provided a clear and fruitful biblical framework for each contemporary issue. The exploration of various points of view is insightful and always gives me perspective—sometimes troubling, sometimes confirming. Kingdom Ethics is like a set of biblical and ethical spectacles to see through the fog of media and ideological distractions.





#### Gene Habecker

President of Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, and a former president of the American Bible Society.

Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis

#### Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy by Eric Metaxas

It's tough to do only one book. C. S. Lewis's Mere Christianity is powerfully important for helping lay foundations and definitions of what we mean by the word Christian. If I could pick another, I'd say Eric Metaxas's book Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy. Bonhoeffer



is a powerful case study on what struggle looks like for believers who truly want to be Christ's disciples in a host culture that co-opts the religious community and its language to achieve its own secular purposes. It offers powerful insights for cultures and nations beyond just Germany.





**Gus Reyes** 

Director of affinity ministries, the Hispanic Education Initiative, and the Christian Life Commission for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

**My Utmost for His Highest** by Oswald Chambers

This devotional was first assigned to me while attending seminary. I was often surprised by how God encouraged, convicted, and challenged me to apply his Word in my life as a student. I continue to



utilize the devotional for spiritual impact in my life and in the lives of others.



**Gabe Lyons** 

CEO of Q Ideas, a learning community that mobilizes Christians to advance the common good in society.

How Now Shall We Live? by Charles Colson

This was the one book that changed the trajectory of my life and clarified my

calling. Colson's simple description of the Christian worldview captured me. After decades in the church, I'd never understood the "creation, fall, redemption" narrative and the implications it

should have on how Christians live their lives. This book laid the foundation for the work we embark on every day at Q, and I'm forever grateful for it.

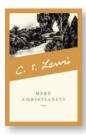


**Amy Simpson** 

Author, editor of Gifted for Leadership, and senior editor of *Leadership Journal*.

#### Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis

I read this book when I was in high school, then again as required reading for a college course. Like Lewis's other work, Mere Christianity builds a great foundation for Christianity as a system of thought that makes



LIVE?

perfect sense without being free of mystery. It has been a confidence booster for me at times when I have needed to draw on its reasoning in supporting others. It also builds a strong model for ministry because Lewis's work is both beautiful and brilliant—which makes it appeal to both the heart and the head—and his writing is smart, wise, and challenging but always accessible.



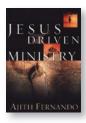
#### **Margaret Feinberg**

Author and public speaker who creates books, Bible studies, and video content for growing in faith.

#### **Jesus Driven Ministry** by Ajith Fernando

Fernando's book is one of my all-time favorite ministry books. He writes out of a Sri Lankan context where men and women are imprisoned for their faith. Seeing what it looks like

to follow Jesus and lead



from that context has stuck with me for many years.

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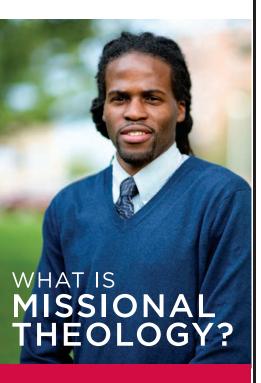
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#### **James Emery White**

Senior pastor at Mecklenburg Community Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, and president of Serious Times, a ministry that ex-

plores the intersection of faith and culture.

#### Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis

This book fueled my imagination for the popular explanation of the Christian faith, while also making a case for its truth—all within the context of a commitment to the church. These dynamics



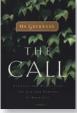
continue to mark my life and ministry, my teaching and writing. I am also the fruit of its reputation, as I read it before I became a follower of Christ.



**Terence Chatmon**President and CEO of the Fellowship of Companies for Christ International.

## The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life by Os Guinness

The Call can be summed up as a book on a life of legacy and purpose. Every one of us is confronted by that question: How do I find and fulfill the central purpose of my life? We



desire to make a difference. We long to leave a legacy. We yearn to leave the world a better place. Our passion is to know that we are fulfilling the purpose for which we are here on Earth. We can live lives of quiet desperation. The secret of man's being is not only to live, but to live for something definite—something, from a Christian perspective, greater than himself. Without a firm notion of what he is living for, man will not accept life and will rather destroy himself than remain on Earth. A quote from Walker Percy in the book is spot-on: "You can get all A's and still flunk life." The Call helped me focus on the greater purpose of life and ministry. My pursuit for Christ's eternal objectives is what drives me and our organizational mission at FCCI. We press on!



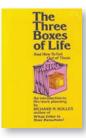
#### C. Jeffrey Wright

Minister, lawyer, and president and CEO of Urban Ministries, Inc., "the largest, independent African American—owned

and operated Christian media company."

#### The Three Boxes of Life and How to Get Out of Them: An Introduction to Life/Work Planning by Richard N. Bolles

This book's approach to life/work planning was my essential guide when I faced the decisions to change from my career as a lawyer to a business career, and then later to a ministry calling. Though



many are familiar with Bolles's job hunting book What Color Is Your Parachute?, most do not know that he is a Christian and that the book was originally written for out-of-work, job-hunting pastors. The Three Boxes of Life is less well known but provides tools for understanding our God through uniqueness and living a balanced life of learning, labor, and leisure through a philosophical and theological framework that many are just beginning to appreciate in the development of theologies of vocation and of marketplace ministry. I believe this is the how-to book for growing, as Jesus did, "in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).



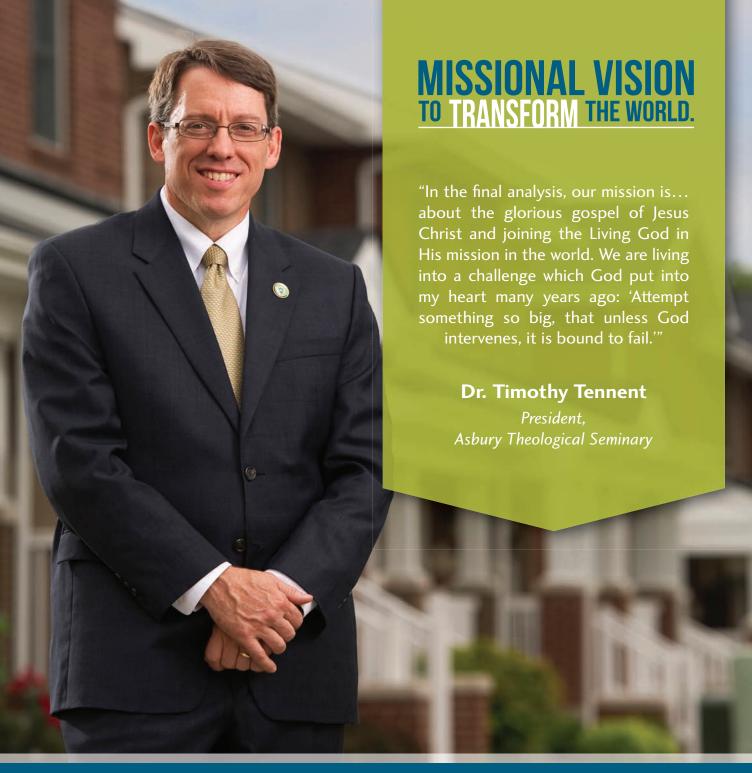
**David Hardage**Executive director of the Baptist General
Convention of Texas.

#### **Improving Your Serve** by Charles Swindoll

As a young minister, this book helped me firmly grasp that ministry was not about me. I came to understand that it was possible to be both a servant and a leader, and that leading gently and humbly



is fulfilling and biblical. I encourage church leaders to remember what Jesus said: that we are called to serve, not to be served.



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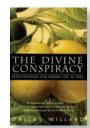


#### **Kara Powell**

Executive director of the Fuller Youth Institute and an assistant professor of youth and family ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary.

## **The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God**by Dallas Willard

While I devoured this classic in a few days, I find myself continuing to learn from the way it offers "smelling salts" to invigorate spiritual formation—both for me personally and for



the church overall. Dallas's description of the false "gospel of sin management" reflects our tendency to reduce the beauty of God's gracious story to a behavioral checklist. In analyzing the church's lack of effective discipleship, Dallas asks a question that regularly haunts me: "Should we not at least consider the possibility that this poor result is not in spite of what we teach and how we teach, but precisely because of it?" Thanks to these penetrating insights, I view *The Divine Conspiracy* as the magnum opus of one of the greatest Christian minds of our time.



#### Robert Gelinas

Lead pastor of Colorado Community Church in Aurora, Colorado, as well as an author, speaker, and jazz theologian.

Free at Last? The Gospel in the African-American Experience by Carl F. Ellis Jr.

This book has had tremendous influence upon my life and ministry. Through Ellis's book, I was first introduced to the concept of jazz theology and the potential of be-



coming a jazz theologian. Additionally, Ellis paints a compelling picture of what it means to "preach the full counsel of God" through a people's history. I've read it at least once a year, every year, for almost 20 years.



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**Dave Gibbons** Lead pastor of Newsong in Irvine, California.

## **The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming** by Henri J. M. Nouwen

The Return of the Prodigal Son illuminated to me the main movement of life: from a son to a father, from receiving to giving, from just asking to generous blessing. These movements helped me to become



more self-aware. I was able to see our calling in being not only sons and daughters, but, beautifully, fathers and mothers of those around us—especially to the prodigals, the outsiders. I was introduced to the book through Leighton Ford in a leadership program for young leaders. We spent about five days discussing the content of the book and meditating on Rembrandt's

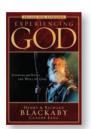
painting *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (shown on the cover of Nouwen's book). The book not only gave me help with self-awareness, but direction on how we are to serve.



Claude Alexander Jr.
Bishop and senior pastor
of The Park Church in
Charlotte, North Carolina.

## **Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God**by Henry Blackaby

Blackaby's book has probably been the most transformative one for me. The mere shift from looking for God to join you to looking where God is working and joining God was revolu-



tionary for me and our congregation in 1996. It helped set the foundation for the growth that we would later experience. It is now a part of our DNA.



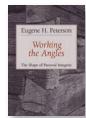
#### Lee Eclov

Senior pastor of Village Church of Lincolnshire in Lake Forest, Illinois, an adjunct professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School,

an author, and an editor.

#### Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity by Eugene Peterson

I'm not able to select one "most influential book," but this is the one that stood out to me. In the late 1980s, Eugene Peterson began to shape me as a pastor, and this book was, I



think, the first of our significant times together. In the pastoral world, so much of our input has to do with skills of one kind or another, or the pastoral gold rush toward glittering growth. Peterson schooled me in things like "contemplative exegesis" and was perhaps the first person to introduce me to spiritual direction, ideas which have made me the pastor I am today.



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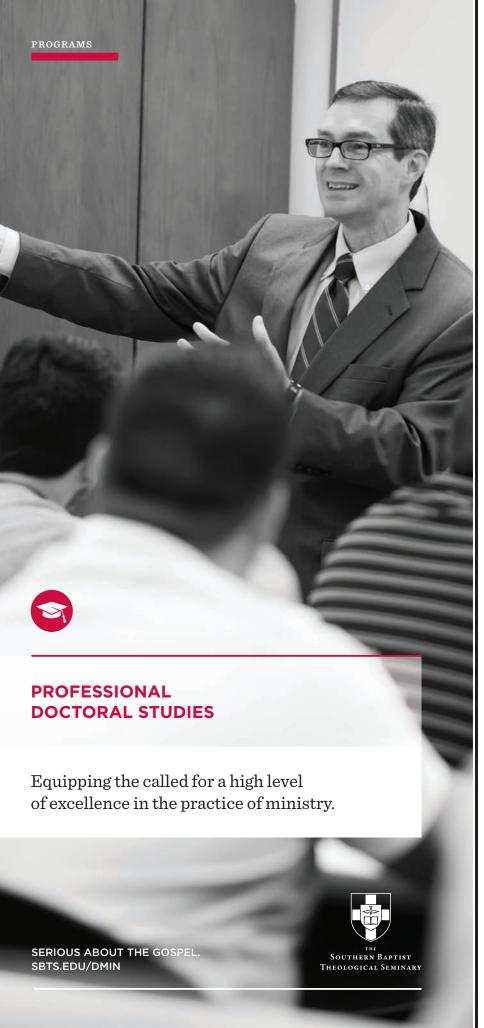


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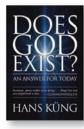


#### Samuel Rodriguez Jr.

Evangelist as well as founder and president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

#### Does God Exist? by Hans Küng

Küng's book served as my de facto lifeboat, assisting in saving me from drowning in the waters of perpetual agnosticism. [I was a] computer engineering major at Penn State, and Küng spoke to



me in my language: mathematics. Via the conduit of calculus and physics, I discovered God. It began with a head hungry for knowledge, and it culminated with a heart open to salvation.



#### Tullian Tchividiian

Senior pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, a lecturer of pastoral theology at Knox Theological Seminary,

and a best-selling author.

Living by Grace by William Hordern

The Hammer of God by Bo Giertz

Who Will Deliver Us? The Present **Power of the Death of Christ** 

by Paul F. M. Zahl

#### Sanctification: Christ in Action by Harold Senkbeil

All of these books have been extremely helpful to me personally and theologically. They've helped me better understand my sin, God's grace, and the distinction between the law and the gospel. They've guided me through deep and wide personal and pastoral challenges, and, I think, have made me a better preacher, pastor, and counselor.





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## Students of 'The Book' & Books of the Students

#### THE TEXTS TODAY'S SEMINARIANS ARE READING

by Samuel Ogles

he boy sat with his back to the fire so it illuminated the pages of the book in his hands. His long legs were sprawled in front of him as he slouched low in a wooden chair inside a log cabin on the frontier. He loved to read.

In fact, he read whatever he could get his hands on and soon grew to love Aesop's Fables, American and English history, Shakespeare, and the Bible. The boy read so often that his neighbors thought him exceptionally lazy. He read for so long that his friends worried he was becoming emaciated. Such was the reputation of the young Abraham Lincoln.

Although he did not have access to many books as a boy, Lincoln's character, worldview, and life's work were shaped by the few he read and reread, over and over. These books are not just an interesting footnote in Lincoln's biography; they're the prologue that makes his story possible. They formed the man who helped shape a nation.

Like Lincoln, future pastors and ministry leaders are also being shaped by books. At seminaries and Christian graduate schools, students are exposed to and influenced by the rich theological history of Protestantism through texts written by great theologians from a variety of backgrounds.

#### THE CLASSIC AND THE NEW

Many texts and authors appear to be popular throughout evangelical theological circles. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Henri Nouwen, Richard Foster, James Bryan

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School of Divinity

Smith, and Stanley Hauerwas are familiar names to most Christian graduate students. Seattle Pacific University regularly uses the works of John Wesley, Karl Barth, and Lesslie Newbigin. At Azusa Pacific University, Dallas Willard features prominently.

"What Willard is articulating in *The Divine Conspiracy* is a very contemporary view of John Wesley," argues Dr. Gary Black Jr., director of the doctor of ministry program at Azusa's Graduate School of Theology. "We also read Scot McKnight's *Kingdom Conspiracy* and a lot of N. T. Wright. All [three authors] are on the same bus, just in different seats."

Other genres can be just as powerful for communicating formation and theological truth. "One book I find myself using for several classes is Bruce Longenecker's *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*," says Dr. Tim Gombis, associate professor of New Testament at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. "It's a fictional work that lays out a correspondence between Luke (the biblical writer) and a Roman nobleman. It helps to provoke discussions on conceptions of ministry and how our visions of church life are af-

fected by culture rather than the Bible."

While the classics continue to be important, course reading lists are also making room for the contemporary. This is partly the result of changes in the publishing industry. "Whereas academic publishers could afford to ignore market forces in the past," notes Gombis, "now they are very attuned to them." Does that mean publishers will cater to the mutable tastes of the public? And isn't that a bad thing? Gombis doesn't think so. "It makes for books by better communicators, like Tim Keller and Donald Miller. They're saying things compellingly, and what they say needs to be heard and considered."

Seminary programs across the board have seen a shift toward lay authors and Christian thought leaders outside of academia, and that's a reflection of the broader evangelical culture. People are reading for practical application of theological principles, and seminaries have taken note.

"I've definitely seen more people reading the more practical authors' work," reports Dr. Bill Donahue, associate professor of pastoral theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Donahue says responding to the issues of the moment is an ongoing, not to mention valuable, trend at seminaries today.

In the Christian culture of the 1980s and '90s, there was an emphasis on group life, which resulted in Donahue being asked to design a master's level subtrack on small groups. "Spiritual formation" became a hot topic in the 1990s, so books and courses were tailored around that. Later, the focus was on being "missional" and on the "gospel." Today, Donahue says "leadership" and "sexuality" are hot topics, and both publishers and graduate courses reflect this.

## WHAT SHOULD PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS READ?

While everyone's path to enrolling in a Christian graduate program is different, most professors have recommendations for what students should read before arriving on campus. Here are five suggestions from the experts.

**Gary Black:** Fortress Press has a series [of books] coming out called Foundations for Learning. I highly recommend [them]. These are seminary professors writing to say, *This is what you should expect in a graduate program.* And a lot of professors will probably use these books in a first class that seminarians take.

Gary Bredfeldt (vice president of strategic initiatives and dean of Capital Seminary and Graduate School): Nancy Pearcey's *Total Truth* is an outstanding book for any believer to read. And if you're going to go to seminary, you've got to be thinking the way Pearcey describes. If there's one book I would recommend, it would be this one.

Bill Donahue: I want prospective students reading leader- and character-formation books because that's the biggest challenge. Lance Witt's *Replenish* is very good. It's simple and small, and it's just on themes and topics. *Resilient Ministry* by Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie is another. It's the result of a study, and they landed on five things you just have to get right if you want a long-term ministry. The hardest thing for students to do is to keep their spiritual life while in graduate school.



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**Tim Gombis:** Christopher Wright's *The Mission of God* is the perfect book to digest in anticipation of seminary, just to get the big picture of what the Bible is all about and what impulses are running through the Christian story.

Richard Steele (professor of moral and historical theology and associate dean of graduate theological studies at Seattle Pacific University): [I recommend] Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies by David Bentley Hart. Hart is not an easy read. In this particular case, what Hart has done is take on the so-called New Atheists. I think it's fair to say "faith" is problematic to many students. They're high on Jesus, but they're a little bit skeptical on God.

Samuel Ogles is a writer living in Wheaton, Illinois. He is a student of contemplation and blogs about ecumenical Christian spirituality at *samuelogles.com*. You can follow him on Twitter (@samuelogles).

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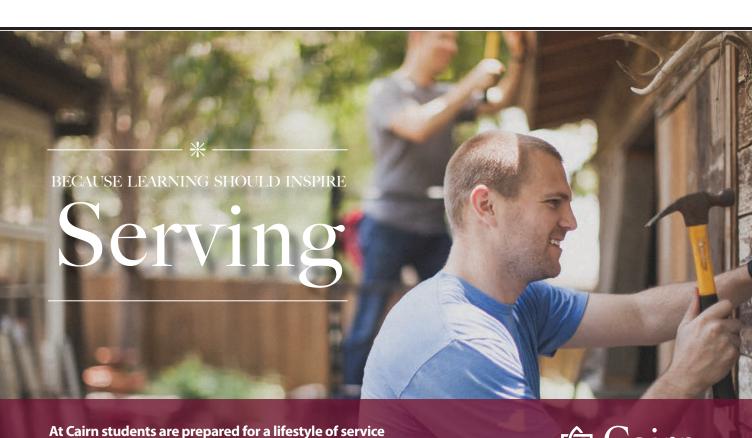
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Azusa Pacific University (CA)	apu.edu
Cairn University (PA)	cairn.edu
Calvin Theological Seminary (MI)	calvinseminary.edu
Dallas Baptist University (TX)	dbu.edu
Dallas Theological Seminary (TX)	dts.edu
Denver Seminary (CO)	denverseminary.edu
Fuller Theological Seminary (CA)	fuller.edu
Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary (MA)	gordonconwell.edu
Indiana Wesleyan University (IN)	indwes.edu
Liberty University (VA)	liberty.edu
Lincoln Christian Seminary (IL)	lincolnchristian.edu
Nashotah House Theological Seminary (WI)	
Northern Seminary (IL)	seminary.edu
Regent Divinity School (VA)	regent.edu/divinity
South University (GA)	southuniversity.edu
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For more information, visit crcna.org /WorldRenewSearch. To apply send cover letter and resume to: Michelle DeBie, Director of Human Resources, worldrenewsearch@crcna.org, by February 6, 2015.

#### **Belhaven University**

teaches each discipline on biblical foundations, and seeks faculty with terminal degrees in the following areas: biology (general), biology (microbiology), musical theatre, mathematics, international studies (all Jackson, MS), and business (Memphis, TN). See belhaven.edu /belhaven/employment.htm for details.

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Talbot School of Theology is a Protestant, evangelical school of theology and one of the schools of Biola University. Faculty profess personal faith in Jesus Christ, endorse a university statement of Christian faith and community values, and are committed to the integration of faith and learning. See the Biola University doctrinal statement at biola.edu /about/doctrinal-statement/.

Biola is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and Talbot is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). As a private religious institution, the university reserves the right to exercise preference on the basis of religion in all of its employment practices.

Education and Experience Required: PhD in psychology preferred. Prior experience in constructing and supervising a degree program preferred. Aptitude for teaching and mentoring students. Evidence of scholarly activity and potential to make significant scholarly contributions to the field. Commitment to the spiritual development of students and to service in their local church. Has counseled, and supervised the counseling of others, in a local church.

**Special Instructions to Applicant:** Please list reference contacts within your CV. Address your letter of inquiry to: Dr. Don Sunukjian; Talbot School of Theology; 13800 Biola Avenue; La Mirada, CA 90639.

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#### **MINISTRY AIDS**

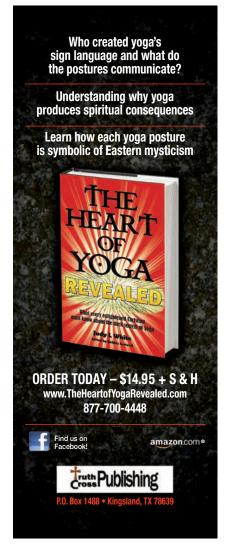
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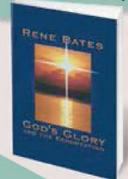
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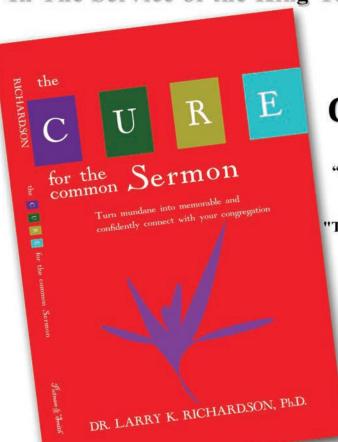
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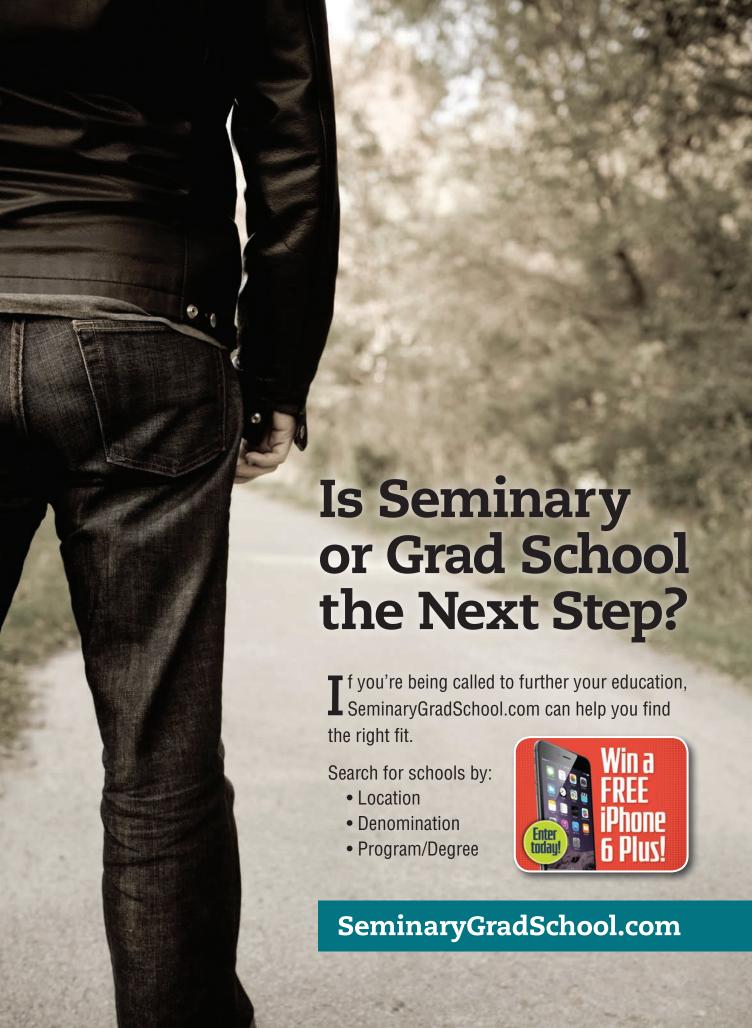
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**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 96** 

Murray M'Cheyne, the Scottish minister. But John and Reta Thornbury weren't fundamentalists. My father wrote biographies of Reformed evangelist Asahel Nettleton and missionary David Brainerd, but he also kept the house supplied with records by Elvis, Johnny Cash, Jerry Reed, and Marty Robbins. And he never came home from the newsstand without bringing some comic books for me.

I professed faith and was baptized at age 9. My father had been nervous baptizing me, saying that I should be buffeted about by the world more before being baptized. I remember him citing as support Edwards, who said that authentic child conversions are rare. He was right. On every level, I seemed to be a fine Christian young person. I even preached my first sermon at age 14 to a statewide Sunday school convention, but I had no business doing so.

After high school, I attended a Christian liberal arts college. In the first semester of my freshman year, I signed up for a course with a brilliant, articulate, recently minted DPhil graduate of Oxford University. The textbook for our introduction to the Bible course was Jesus: A New Vision, by Marcus J. Borg, a prominent fellow of the Jesus Seminar. The scholarly project intended to discover "the historical Jesus" apart from creedal commitments or church teaching.

In that volume, Borg coolly explained that Jesus had never claimed to be the Son of God and had never thought of himself as Savior. We learned that the Bible was a pastiche of traditions and sources, cobbled together mainly in the second century. Our task as biblical interpreters was to unravel what was "authentically Jesus" from mythology and church tradition.

In a subsequent course on the synoptic Gospels, we read works from Robert W. Funk, the founder of the Jesus Seminar. We learned how to do form and redaction analysis, a method of study that assumes the author of a biblical text is motivated by a theological agenda rather than by reporting what he had seen. We simply "knew" that the book we were holding in our hands did not have a direct connection to the apostles whose names were associated with the Gospels and Epistles.

For me, this dose of higher criticism

was nearly lethal. Any sense that the Bible was divinely inspired and trustworthy, or that the creeds had metaphysical gravitas, started to seem implausible. The best I could muster was that, somehow mystically, perhaps Jesus was the Christ, existentially speaking. I was approaching something close to New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman's own story of losing faith.

#### **PHILOSOPHER'S DEFENSE**

When I told my father what I was thinking, he was alarmed. He recommended different apologetics works that defended biblical authority. I sloughed them off. Keep in mind that this was an era before figures such as Craig Blomberg, N. T. Wright, and Luke Timothy Johnson had gained notoriety among evangelicals and had written their best work on the historical reliability of the Scriptures.

Then Dad had a brainstorm. He knew that I was enamored with modern philosophy. So one day when I phoned home, he said, "There's an evangelical theologian who might interest you. His PhD is in philosophy. He believes the Bible is inerrant. His name is Carl F. H. Henry. Find the volumes of *God, Revelation, and Authority* in your library, and read them before you decide to give up the faith."

Soon after, I walked down the long staircase at the college library, sat down on the floor in the stacks, and pulled out *God, Revelation, and Authority*. It was my own *tolle lege*—"take up and read!"—moment of crisis. The first lines of the first chapter of the first volume rang out to me:

No fact of contemporary Western life is more evident than its growing distrust of final truth and its implacable questioning of any sure word.

That was me. I kept reading for days

I had come within a whisker of losing my faith. But because Henry was a philosopher defending biblical authority, I rallied. on end. I cried and kept searching, and genuine faith began to awaken.

Henry helped secure my faith because he was doing more than responding tit-fortat to higher critics of the Bible's historical reliability. Henry did that, but he went one step further: He brought philosophical gravitas to *God, Revelation, and Authority*. His focus was broad. He addressed epistemology—how we can know the truth, which was my primary concern as an undergraduate philosophy student. I had come within a whisker of losing my faith. But because Henry was a philosopher defending biblical authority, I rallied.

Humanly speaking, had it not been for the first editor of *Christianity Today*, the theologian with a titanic brain and a journalist's pen, I could have gone the other way. Henry showed me how to be both a scholar and a follower of Jesus. From that moment in my undergraduate days, I covenanted with God to help people like the 18-year-old version of myself—people who are on the boundary of leaving the church, and are looking for just one good reason to stay.

Nearly one decade after my dark night of the soul, Paul House, C. Ben Mitchell, Richard Bailey, and I wrote Henry at his retirement home in Watertown, Wisconsin, to express our collective appreciation for and indebtedness to his work. He wrote back, and invited us to visit him and his wife, Helga. Our time together began a wonderful season of visits, correspondence, and mutual encouragement.

Carl combined head and heart. Both piety and doctrinal precision mattered to him. Once, in a PhD seminar, a student asked 20th-century evangelicalism's leading thinker: "What is the greatest question being asked in contemporary theology?"

Carl didn't miss a beat: "The same question that the apostles posed to their generation: 'Have you met the resurrected Lord?'"

That gritty, realistic response took me back to that library and to the books that helped secure my faith in the resurrected Lord. And all these years later, it's clearer to me now more than ever: Carl F. H. Henry is still asking the right questions.

**GREGORY ALAN THORNBURY** is president of The King's College and the author of Recovering Classic Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry (Crossway).



## My Higher Criticism Crisis

Had it not been for the first editor of CT, I likely would have gone the way of Bart Ehrman.

By Gregory Alan Thornbury

was born at the Evangelical Community Hospital in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania—a fact that once prompted a friend of mine to say, "You're evangelical born, evangelical bred, and when you die, you'll be evangelical dead." My father, John Forrest Thornbury, was the model of a country parson, serving as the pastor of Winfield Baptist Church, a historic congregation in the American Baptist tradition, for 44 years.

My childhood environs prefigured what has become my life's passion: the relationship of Christian faith to higher education. Lewisburg is home to Bucknell University, an elite private college whose alumni include two evangelical luminaries: Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, and Makoto Fujimura, acclaimed contemporary painter. Several years ago, Tim told me that he had occasionally attended my father's church while at Bucknell.

Founded by a Baptist association, Bucknell originally existed to further the cause of Christ. Writing to fellow churches across Pennsylvania, the association's leaders explained that through Bucknell, they sought "to see . . . the cause of God, the honor and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom promoted in all our bounds, and spreading far and wide until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ." Bucknell held its first classes in the basement of the First Baptist Church in the fall of 1846.

The school's reputation loomed large in our community, but like so many other premier US colleges and universities, it slowly abandoned orthodoxy. Today, you would be hard-pressed to find anything on Bucknell's website about its origins as a Christian institution. As I grew up, perhaps unconsciously I was aware of this fact: Faith is something that can be lost.

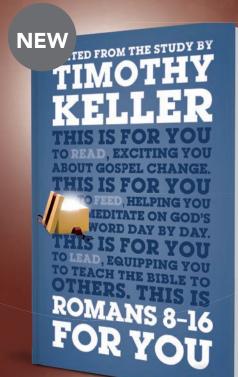
Still, because of my father, I heard the gospel faithfully preached every Sunday. My mother cooked bacon and eggs for 🚡 me every morning and read to me passages from Jonathan Ed-CONTINUED ON PRECEDING PAGE wards, Matthew Henry, and Robert

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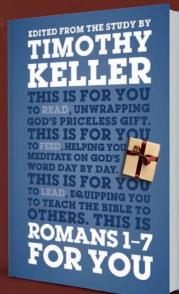


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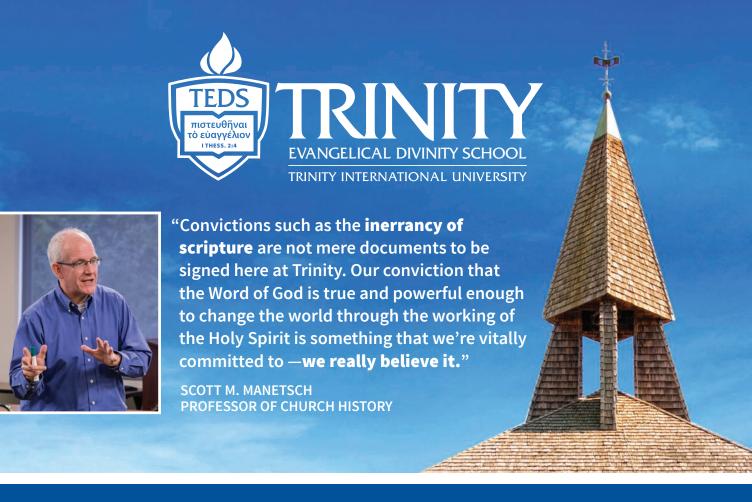












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